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THOUGHTS ON GREAT MYSTERIES

FROM THE WRITINGS OF
FREDERICK WILLIAM FABER



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THOUGHTS
ON
GREAT MYSTERIES.

SELECTED FROM THE WORKS OF

FREDERICK WILLIAM FABER, D.D.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY J. S. PURDY, D.D.

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PREFACE.

Frederick William Faber is widely known by his tender and fervent Hymns, but outside the Roman Church he is comparatively unknown by his writings in Prose. These writings fill eight octavo volumes, and each volume contains about four hundred and fifty compactly printed pages. The extent of these works therefore is sufficient to deter many religious and thoughtful people from all acquaintance with their contents. A weightier reason exists. Faber was a convert to Rome, and when he espoused the Roman Catholic Dogmas, he did so unreservedly, and with the whole strength of his ardent nature. Hence the most intensely Romish spirit, and the most extravagant of Romish ideas, pervade certain portions of these volumes. But in making **this** selection such portions have been omitted.

I now state the reason why these selections from Faber are published.

It is their intrinsic worth. From apostolic times at least two schools of Theology have existed. One school is the Thomist, so named from Thomas Aquinas; the other is the Scotist, named from the learned Duns Scotus. In the Thomist school, Theology begins with man. It is our fallen nature which requires redemption. Hence the eternal Son of God must assume our nature; He must arrest the ruin of our race and conquer for it an inheritance far better than its primeval possession; in short, the Lord Jesus must execute a plan competent to meet every need of our sinful spirits. This is verily true; yet this terminology, consciously or unconsciously, tends to invest the sublime facts of redemption with the look of an afterthought; and thus, to use a favorite phrase with this school of Theology, "God Manifest in the Flesh was an expedient to meet a dire emergency," but the expedient has been only a partial success, although it exhausted the resources of the Almighty. I write with reverence and hesitation on these "Mysteries" of "The Faith"; yet, inasmuch as Theology is the science of things supernatural, I firmly believe it were better to regard it less on the

side which looks to our human wants, and more on the side which looks towards God; "for in the shoreless ocean of the soul, the tides heave and swell" the strongest, only when the soul itself is penetrated by "the Powers of the world to come."

Faber is a Scotist. He begins with God. Thus, from all eternity, the Incarnation is a predetermined fact in the mind of the Creator. To send the co-eternal Word, in "the likeness of human flesh," was the "eternal purpose" of the Father, and out of this purpose originate all the relations of the "Creator and the creature." Hence not as an after-thought, but from everlasting, the Creator ordains the creature, and by the creature's unforced volitions, "to be conformed to the Image of His Son"; so "in love God hath predestinated him to filial adoption by Christ Jesus"; hath called him to "His heavenly kingdom," and to His "eternal glory."

Now in the dominant teaching of the day the starting-point is man! It is so in every thing. It is so always. It is so everywhere. Thence the pride, the arrogance, the boastfulness, the overweening self-confidence; thence also, the "science so called," which out of some indefinable force, or some imaginary sea of mist,

strives to reconstruct the universe. Here too, unconsciously, is the perverted source of the unruly, disdainful, disobedient, and earthly tempers, which infest our modern life.

But Faber's view of Theology, both as a science and as an art, supplies to these evils a pertinent and practical remedy. For with Faber "the one department of knowledge, which like an ample palace contains within itself the mansions of every other knowledge, which deepens and extends the interest of every other, gives it new charms and additional purpose, the study of which, rightly and liberally pursued, is beyond any other entertaining, beyond all others, tends at once to tranquillize and enliven, to keep the mind elevated and steadfast, the heart humble and tender, is Biblical Theology—the Philosophy of Religion, and the Religion of Philosophy" [Coleridge]. Thus, in these selections, Faber presents the twofold side of Christian Theology; for, starting from God, it is in his view, first, the Queen of sciences; the methodized knowledge of things revealed; as such it levels pride, it shames boastfulness, it curbs the unruly will, and it so chastens the mere earthly ambitions of the human soul as to let "no flesh glory before the power and the presence of the Almighty."

But, next, with Faber, Theology is an art. As an art, it takes the great facts of Revelation and applies them to the soul and to the concerns of this life. From this point of view, Faber evermore presses on our recognition, God the Father loving man from all eternity; God the Son everlastingly yearning to redeem every sinner; God the Holy Ghost ever ready to convert, renew, and sanctify the individual soul. So human sinfulness is an awful invasion upon the Creator's rights; it is an awful affront and an unmeasured ingratitude to the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"; it is an awful repulsion of the Holy Ghost sent to be in man the hope of glory and the earnest of an endless life.

Yet, further, to sustain the foregoing position, I cite an example. It is in this book, Part III., "The Precious Blood." Here Faber's method, and his devout and practical treatment of the mystery, are of pre-eminent worth. In this day much is read and heard of Life. It is the key-note to a large proportion of the teaching of the time. There is comparatively little printed or spoken of "The Shedding of Blood, without which there is no Remission." Sometimes this Theology is stigmatized as "a Blood Theology." But, on such a funda-

mental Doctrine as "The Blood of Christ," to let the terms of Scripture fall into disuse, is, sooner or later, to let the teaching of Scripture first be distorted and at last be denied. Rowland Hill was once asked, how it were best to preach the Cross? The wise old man replied, "Always preach the Cross in relation to Christian duty, and always preach Christian duty in relation to the Cross." Now Faber's treatment of the mystery of "the Precious Blood" first exalts infinitely the gloriousness of the Cross, then it quickens the conscience, it creates repentance, it invigorates faith, it kindles love, it ennobles duty, and as the crown of all it restores the baptized and regenerate soul to Him who is the sole way to the "Inheritance of the saints in Light."

But I name a supreme and final element which adds value to these selections. It is the rare make of Faber's mind. For it is at once, logical, rhetorical, poetic, devout, and yet profoundly practical. Thus, at one time, he reasons with a precision and continuity of thought in which not a single link is weak or wanting to the chain of his argument. Then, again, he is master of a solid yet superb rhetoric. In Part II., on the "Incarnation," and in Part I., on the "Creator and the Creature,"

over the profoundest speculations, and over the strongest arguments, he throws the graces of beauty, attractiveness, the fruits of inventive genius, all the riches of a cultivated mind and a devout soul. Also Faber is poetic. He gives a wondrous reality to the things of an invisible world. He suffuses with a serene and sacred glow the plainest duties of life; he lends to the verities of an eternal world form and substance; and to the believing heart he makes present, as a fact, the joys at the right hand of God.

Now to quote instances of this rare combination of qualities in Faber's mind is superfluous; yet one or two may be useful. As to his poetic power let a single example suffice. The good Jeremy Taylor, in his sermon on "The Return of a Good Man's Prayers," has the famous and oft-quoted image of a lark. So, also, in the first chapter of Part II., on the Incarnation, Faber finds a symbol in the lark. He may have had in his thought the similitude of the saintly Taylor; however, Faber's lark sings as sweetly, rises upon a wing as strong, and descends from a far loftier "shrine of Light."

However, above all, Faber is intensely practical; and always keeps uppermost in view the sanctification of the individual soul. He

perpetually applies Theology, as an art, to the practice of the plainest and most prosaic duties of human life. As a proof of this statement let me direct attention to Faber's consideration of "Kindness," Part IV., Chapter 2. Here he is plain, pertinent, yet truly original; but withal, very practical. "Men," he remarks, "may be charitable yet not kind; self-denying yet not kind; merciful yet not kind. Kindness has a mission, to go into every corner and to reconquer this unhappy world back to God. It is a devotion of ourselves to the bliss of the Divine Life. It prepares the way to the disinterested Love of the eternal Father." Thus Faber takes this remnant of a pure, inborn quality of the soul, and he shows how, by grace, it may lead to grace; and, as an angel from on high, may open to one who exercises it the very path to Paradise.

Now to evince Faber's practical power, I notice two examples. Let the first be, "On a Taste for Reading," Part IV., Chapter 4. Truly this age is called a reading age. But how does it read? Long ago the folio vanished. The octavo is in its dotage. The primer has appeared: this means, haste, impatience, and therefore, superficialness. It means

the hurry-scurry of the modern mind. Now, as Faber wisely affirms, "The hardest thing in the world is to think." But, even beyond this, the hardest thing in the world, I venture to affirm, is to think well and to think wisely. Yet let any one ponder this little selection from Faber "On a Taste for Reading," and most surely new ideas will arise in the mind; new motives will stir the heart; loftier impulses will stir the soul; and reading, which at first is a luxury, next a defence, at last may become a light leading to the "Word who alone is the True Wisdom" and "the Light of Life."

Next, "The World," Part I., Chapter 7. Just here the practical quality of Faber's devout mind shines in its most resplendent power. For at once he is analytical, he is fair, he is keen-sighted, he is thoroughly Scriptural. So far as I have read them, all Christian teachers on this subject of the world are one-sided. Some are uncompromising, stern, severe; so as not only to repel the unbelieving but to create in their mind a bitter resentment and a burning sense of injustice. Others are ascetic. Their words are lunar caustic; they scorch, but rarely save. In their view, "The whole world lieth in wickedness." The real owner and ruler of it is the Devil. A man's sole safety from

it is flight. Others, again, see but with one eye; their gaze is fixed on the fair side of the world; but one hears or reads their glittering plausibilities with a sense at the moment soothed, but at last utterly unsatisfied. This teaching is an enchanting cloud, shaped and shifted by the airs of earth, yet it is in no way illumined by the Sun of Righteousness. Now let the reader consult Faber on this topic; as I have heretofore said, he is fair, analytic, scriptural. In his view this world is dual. Thus it corresponds to the duality of the soul; and so the world has its dark side, it has its bright side. But no Christian can carry in his heart at once these two aspects of the world, fairly and fully balanced; and therefore, accordingly, as Faber finely discriminates, the dark side of the world tends to generate one type, and the bright side of the world another type of the Christian life.

It is well, it is very wise, if at times the believer fastens his gaze on either side of this dual aspect of the world; for the dark side cures presumption, and it tempers the elation of soul which emboldens one to walk on the edge of moral precipices with the "step of a spiritual giant." The bright side refines the meanest task and gilds the humblest duty.

**"A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine;
Who sweeps a room and owns thy law,
Makes that and the action fine."**

It is God's world, and the secret of all is, "To be not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord."

I commend this little book of "Selections" to all Christian people. If it be a help to any Christian man or woman, I shall be thereby largely rewarded.

J. S. PURDY.

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PART I.

CREATION.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT IT IS TO BE A CREATURE.

There is hardly any mystery the consideration of which is more fruitful in the soul and understanding than that of creation; and yet it hardly gets its fair share of thought from the generality of Christians. In theology it throws immense light upon the divine attributes, sin, grace, redemption and similar questions.

We are creatures. What is it to be a creature? We find ourselves in existence to-day, with multitudes of our fellow-creatures round about us. We have been alive and on the earth so many years, so many months, so many weeks, so many days, so many hours. At such and such a time we came to the use of reason; but at such an age, and in such a way that we clearly did not confer our reason on ourselves. But here we are to-day, not only with a reason, but with a character of our own, and fulfilling a destiny in some appointed station in life. We know nothing of what has gone before us, except some little of the exterior of the past, which history or family records have told us of. We do not doubt that the sun and the moon,

the planets and the stars, the blue skies and the four winds, the wide green seas and the fruitful earth, were before our time; indeed, before the time of man at all. Science unriddles mysterious things about them; but all additional light seems only to darken and to deepen our real ignorance.

So it is with the creature man. He finds himself in existence,—an existence which he did not give to himself. He knows next to nothing of what has gone before; and absolutely nothing of what is to come, except so far as his Creator is pleased to reveal it to him supernaturally. He knows nothing of what is to happen to himself on earth. Whether his future years will be happy or sorrowful, whether he will rise or fall, whether he will be well or ailing, he knows not. It is not in his own hands, neither is it before his eyes. If you ask him the particular and special end which he is to fulfil in his life; what the peculiar gift or good which he was called into being to confer upon his fellow-men; what the exact place and position which he was to fill in the great social whole; he can not tell you. It has not been told to him. The chances are, with him as with most men, that he will die, and yet not know it. And why? Because he is a creature.

His being born was a tremendous act. Yet it was not his own. It has entangled him in quantities of difficult problems, and implicated him in numberless important responsibilities. In fact he has in him an absolute inevitable necessity either of endless joy or of endless misery; though he is free to choose between the two. Annihilation he is not free to choose. Reach out into the on-coming eternity as far as the fancy

can, there still will this man be, simply because he has been already born. The consequences of his birth are not only unspeakable in their magnitude, they are simply eternal. Yet he was not consulted about his birth. He was not offered the choice of being or not being. Mercy required that he should not be offered it, justice did not require that he should. We are not concerned now to defend God. We are only stating facts, and taking the facts as we find them. It is a fact that he was not consulted about his own birth; and it is truer and higher than all facts that God can do nothing but what is blessedly, beautifully right. A creature has no right to be consulted about his own creation; and for this reason simply, that he is a creature.

He has no notion why it was that his particular soul rather than any soul, was called into being, and put into his place. Not only can he conceive a soul far more noble and devout than his, but he sees, as he thinks, peculiar deficiencies in himself, in some measure disqualifying him for the actual position in which God has placed him. And how can he account for this? Yet God must be right. And his own liberty too must be very broad and strong and responsible. He clearly has a work to do, and came here simply to do it; and it is equally clear that if God will not work with him against his own will, he also can not work without God. Every step which a creature takes when he has once been created, increases his dependence upon his Creator. He belonged utterly to God by creation: if words would enable us to say it, he belongs still more utterly to God by preservation. In a word the creature becomes more completely, more

thoroughly, more significantly, a creature every moment that his created life is continued to him. This is, in fact, his true blessedness,—to be ever more and more enclosed in the hand of God who made him. The Creator's hand is the creature's home.

As he was not consulted about his coming into the world, so neither is he consulted about his going out of it. He does not believe he is going to remain always on earth. He is satisfied that the contrary will be the case. He knows that he will come to an end of this life, without ceasing to live. He is aware that he will end this life with more or less of pain,—pain without a parallel, pain like no other pain, and most likely very terrible pain. For though the act of dying is itself probably painless, yet it has for the most part to be reached through pain. Death will throw open to him the gates of another world, and will be the beginning to him of far more solemn and more wonderful actions than it has been his lot to perform on earth. Every thing to him depends on his dying at the right time and in the right way. Yet he is not consulted about it. He is entitled to no kind of warning. No sort of choice is left him either of time, or place, or manner. It is true he may take his own life. But he had better not. His liberty is indeed very great since this is left free to him. Yet suicide would not help him out of his difficulties. It only makes certain to him the worst that could be. He is only cutting off his own chances: and by taking his life into his own hands, he is rashly throwing himself out of his own hands in the most fatal way conceivable. One whose business it is to come when he is called, and to depart when he is bidden, and to

have no reason given him—either for his call or his dismissal—except such as he can gather from the character of his Master, such is man upon earth; and he is so because he is a creature.

Let us now advance a step further. Let us pass from the *position* of this creature to what we know to be his *real history*. Let us look at him in the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He may occupy a very private position in the world. He may not be known beyond the sanctuary of his own family, or the limits of a moderate circle of acquaintances. The great things of the world have no reference to him, and public men do not consult him. He has his little world of hopes and fears, of joys and sadnesses, and strangers intermeddle not with either. His light and his darkness are both his own. But he is a person of no consequence. The earth, the nation, the shire, the village go on without his interference. He is a man like the crowd of men, and is not noticeable in any other way. Yet the beginning of his history is a long way off. Far in the eternal mind of God, further than you can look, he is there. He has had place there from eternity; and before ever the world was, he lay there with the light of God's goodness around him, and the clearness of God's intentions upon him, and was the object of a distinct, transcending, and unfathomable love. There was more of power, of wisdom, and of goodness in the love which God bore through eternity to that insignificant man than we can conceive of, though we raise our imaginations to the greatest height of which they are capable. May we say it? He was part of God's glory, of God's bliss, through all the unrevolving ages of a past eternity.

The hanging up in heaven of those multitudes of brilliant worlds, the composition, the adornment, and the equipoise of their ponderous masses, all the marvels of inanimate material creation, all the inexplicable chemistry which is the world's life were as nothing compared to the intense brooding of heavenly love, the compassionate fulness of divine predestination over that single soul. So long as there has been a God, so long has that soul been the object of His knowledge and His love. Ever since the uncreated abyss of almighty love has been spread forth, there lay that soul gleaming on its bright waters. O, no wonder God is so patient with sinners, no wonder Jesus died for souls!

But this is not the whole of his real history. There is more about him still. We do not know what the secrets of his conscience may be, nor whether he is in a state of grace, nor what might be God's judgment of him if He called him away at this moment. But whatever comes of these questions, it is a simple matter of fact that that man was part of the reason of the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity. He belongs to Jesus and was created for Jesus. He is part of his Saviour's property and meant to adorn His Kingdom. His body and his soul are both of them fashioned, after their degree, after the model of the Body and Soul of the Word made flesh. His predestination flowed out from, and is enclosed in, the predestination of Jesus. He is the brother of his God. He was foreseen in the decree of the Incarnation. The glory of his soul, and the possibilities of his human heart entered as items into that huge sum of attractions which drew the Eternal Word to seek

His delights among the sons of men by assuming their created nature to His uncreated Person. His sins were partly the cause why the Precious Blood was shed; and Jesus suffered, died, rose again, and ascended for him, as completely as if he were the only one of his race that ever fell. There must be something very attractive in him for our Lord to have loved him thus steadily, and thus ardently. You see that He counted that creature's sins over long and long ago. He saw them as we blind men never can see them—singly and separately in all their unutterable horror and surpassing malice. Then He viewed them as a whole, perhaps thousands in number, and aggravated by almost every variety of circumstance of which human actions are capable. And nevertheless there was something in that man which so drew upon the love of the unspeakably holy God, that He determined to die for him to satisfy and over-satisfy for all his sins, to merit for him a perfect sea of untold graces, and to beguile him by the most self-sacrificing generosity to the happiness of His divine embraces. All this was because that man was His creature. So you see what a history his has been, what a stir he has made in the world by having to do with the Incarnation; how he has been mixed up with eternal plans, and has helped to bring a seeming change over the ever-blessed and unchanging God! Alas! if it is hard to see good points in others, how much harder must it be for God to see good points in us, and yet how He loves us all!

But to return to our man whoever he may be. It is of course true that God had a general purpose in the whole of creation, or to speak more truly, many

general purposes. But it is also true that He had a special purpose in this man whom we are picturing to ourselves. The man came into the world to do something particular for God, to carry out some definite plan, to fulfil some one appointed end, which belongs to him in such a way that it does not belong to other men. There is a peculiar service, a distinct glory, which God desires to have from that man, different from the service and the glory of any other man in the world: and the man's dignity and happiness will result from his giving God that service and glory and no other. As he did not make himself, so neither can he give himself his own vocation. He does not know what special function it has fallen to him to perform in the immense scheme and gigantic world of his Creator; but it is not the less true that he has such a special function. Life as it unfolds will bring it to him. Years will lay his duty and his destiny at his door in parts successively. Perhaps on this side of the grave he may never see his work as an intelligible whole. It may be part of his work to be tried by this very obscurity. But with what a dignity it invests the man to know of him that, as God chose his particular soul at the moment of its creation rather than countless other possible and nobler souls, so does He vouchsafe to be dependent on this single man for a glory and a love, which, if this man refuses it to Him, He will not get from any other man, nor from all men put together! God has an interest at stake which depends exclusively on that single man; and it is in the man's power to frustrate this end, and millions do so. When we consider who, and how infinitely blessed, God is, is not this special des-

tiny of each man a touching mystery? How close it seems to bring the Creator and the creature! And where is the dignity of the creature save in the love of the Creator?

Now let us draw some conclusions about the man from what has been already said. The first is this. As "*creature*" is his name, his history, and his condition, he must obviously have the conduct and the virtues befitting a creature. He must behave as what he is. His propriety consists in his doing so. He must be made up of fear, of obedience, of submission, of humility, of prayer, of repentance, and above all of love. As fire warms and frost chills, as the moon shines by night and the sun by day, as birds have wings and trees have leaves, so must man as a creature conduct himself as such, and do those virtuous actions which are chiefly virtues because they are becoming to him and adapted to his condition. The demeanor, the behavior, the excellencies of a creature must bear upon them the stamp of his created nature and condition. This is too obvious to need enforcing, obvious when stated, yet most strangely forgotten by most men during the greater part of their lives.

Our second conclusion about this man is that whatever may be his attainments or his inclinations, the only knowledge worth much of his time and trouble, the only science which will last with him and stand him in good stead consists in his study of the character of God. He received every thing from God. He belongs to Him. He is surrounded by Him. His fate is in God's hands. His eternity is to be with God in a companionship of unspeakable delights. Or, if it

is to be in exile from Him, it is the absence of God which will be the intolerableness of his misery. His own being implies God's being, and he exists, not for himself, but for God.

Our third conclusion is that if God is to be the subject of the man's intellectual occupations, God must be equally the object of his moral conduct. God must have his whole heart as well as his whole mind. We have no doubt that man's soul is a perfect mine of practical energies, which the longest and most active life will not half work out. The muscle of the heart acts seventy times a minute for perhaps seventy years, and is not tired. Yet what is this to the activity of the soul? He has far more energies in him than his neighbors are aware of, more than he suspects himself. He can do wonders with these energies if he concentrates them on any object, whether it be wealth, pleasure, or power. Our conclusion implies that, while he may *use* his energies on any or all of those three things, he must *concentrate* them on God only, on the loving observance of his Creator's law. We do not see what being a creature means, if it does not mean this; though we know that there are creatures who have irrevocably determined not to do it, and their name is devil, a species they have created for themselves in order to escape as far as they can to the outskirts of the creation of eternal power and love. Why be like them? Why go after them? Why not leave them to themselves at the dreadful dismal pole of our Father's empire?

If we take all the peculiarities of the creature and throw them into one, if we sum them all up, and express them in the ordinary language of Christian doc-

trine, we should say that they came to this,—that as man was not his own beginning, so also he is not his own end. His end is God, and man belies his own position as a creature, whenever he swerves from this his sole true end. To make God always our end is always to remember that we are creatures, and to be a saint is always to make God our end. Hence to be a saint is always to remember, and to act on the remembrance, that we are creatures. Yet, horrible as it sounds when put into words, it is the common way of men to make God a means instead of an end, a purveyor instead of a judge, if they make any use of Him at all. How few can turn round upon themselves at any given moment of life when they do not happen to be engaged in spiritual exercises, and can say, “God is my end. At this moment, when I unexpectedly look in upon myself, while I was acting almost unconsciously, I find that I was doing, what a creature should always be doing,—seeking God. My worldly duties and social occupations were understood to be means only, and were treated accordingly. There was nothing in my mind and heart which partook of the dignity of an end except God.” Yet is it not our simple business? We expect even a dog to come when he is called, and a clock to go when it is wound up; and in like manner God, when He creates us, expects us to seek Him as our only end and sovereign good.

To sum up briefly the results of this chapter, it appears that a creature is a very peculiar and cognizable thing; that it gives birth to a whole set of duties, obligations, virtues, and proprieties; that it implies a certain history, past and future, and a certain present

condition; that on it are founded all our relations to God, and therefore all our practical religion; and that it involves in its own self, without reference to any additional mercies, the precise obligation of loving our Creator supremely as our sole end and of serving Him from the motive of love.

CHAPTER II.

WHAT IT IS TO HAVE A CREATOR.

How difficult is it to conceive of a Life without creatures, a Life which was from everlasting without them, which needs them not, which mixes them not up with itself, to which they can add nothing, and from which they can take nothing. There is something unutterably appalling in a Life eternally by itself,—self-sufficing, its own glory, its own knowledge, its own magnificence, its own intense blessedness, its own silent, vast, unthrilling love. Surely to think of such a Life is to worship it. But It, it is not It,—there were no *things* then,—it is *He*, our God and our Creator. Out of that Life we came, when the Life had spent an eternity without us. The Life needed us not, was none the happier because of us, ruled not over a wider empire through us, multiplied not in us the objects of omniscience. But the Life loved us, and therefore out of the Life we came, and from its glorious sunbright fountains, have filled the tiny vases of our created lives.

It is plain that our Creator is one who stands in a relation to us which has no parallel whatever among the relations which exist between ourselves and other creatures. Not only is the relationship between our

Creator and ourselves unlike any thing else, but it is far closer than any other tie of love by which the human soul can possibly be bound. He is obviously nearer to us than father or mother. We come more directly from Him than from them. We are more bound up with Him, and owe Him more. We can not come of age with God, nor alter our position with Him. We can not grow out of our dependence upon Him, nor leave the home of His right hand. The act of our creation is not done once for all, and then ceased. Preservation is but the continuance of creation, the non-interruption of the first divine act of power and love. The strong spirit of the highest angel needs the active concurrence of God every moment, lest it should fall back into its original nothingness.

The difference between His nature and ours is not like that which separates the angels from men, or men from the various tribes of animals below them. It is an infinite difference. And thus when we call Him Father, or King, Shepherd, or Friend, our language only implies a privilege which He allows to us, not any duties to which He is bound or rights to which we are entitled. As our Creator, His rights are simply unfathomable. He has no duties to us, nothing which can rigorously be called duties. He has made promises to us, and because He is God He is faithful. But as creatures we have no claims. We are bound to Him, and bound by obligations of duty, and under penalties of tremendous severity. He on His part overwhelms us with magnificent liberalities of His unshackled love. Yet God is neither a slave-master nor a despot, not only because of His infinite good-

ness, but because His rights are not limited like theirs. No creature can feel toward his fellow-creatures as we feel toward Him, in the grasp of whose omnipotence we are at once so helpless and so contented.

Hence, also, we never think of questioning the wisdom of God, or His power, or His love. Our confidence in the worth of men is in a great measure proportioned to the degrees in which we consider them pledged to us, whether by duty, by gratitude, by relationship, by honor, or by necessity. Whereas it is just the reverse with our trust in God. Our confidence in Him is boundless because His sovereignty over us is boundless also. There is nothing in creation which we do not seem to have some right to question. But with God it is not so. Here we are simple belief, implicit reliance, unhesitating dependence. Then, as we can not question Him, we take Him on faith. It does not perplex our dealings with Him that we do not understand Him. We take God on faith, because He is God; and we take nothing else on faith except so far as we account it to represent God, either as His instrument, or His representative, or His likeness in goodness, in justice, in fidelity, in love.

The service of the Creator is the creature's most enduring reality. The unreality of the world is an old story. It was told in Athens before ever our Saviour preached in Palestine. It is a miserable thing to build on sand, or to give our money for that which is not bread. Yet it is what we are all of us doing all our lives long, except when we are loving God. Human love is a treachery and a delusion. It soon wears threadbare, and we die of cold. Place and office slip from us when our hands get old and numb and can

not grasp them tight. Riches, says the Holy Ghost, make to themselves wings and fly away. Good health is certainly a boundless enjoyment; but it is always giving way beneath us, and our years of strength are after all but few, and our vigor seems to go when we need it most. But the service of God improves upon acquaintance, gives more than it promises, and after a little effort is nothing but rewards, and rewards which endure for evermore.

But this is not all. Not only are all these things the truest, greatest, highest, wisest, best, widest, and most enduring dignity, happiness, interest, wisdom, liberty, and reality, but the service of the Creator is the creature's *sole* end, dignity, happiness, interest, wisdom, liberty, and reality. He has no other, none that have a right to the name, none that are not pretenders, and he who seeks any other will never find them. However deliberate his evil choice, he will not gain earth by forfeiting heaven. If he works for Here, he will lose Here as well as Hereafter. Whereas if he works for Hereafter, he will gain Here as well. Moreover the service of the Creator is not only the creature's solitary end, dignity, happiness, interest, wisdom, liberty, and reality, but the opposite evils of all these things will flow from its neglect. In a word, unless we serve God, the world is a dismal, unmeaning, heart-breaking wilderness, and life no more than an insoluble and unprofitable problem.

It follows from what has been said that there can not be much question as to the extent of our service of God, or the degree in which we are to serve Him. If He is our last end, then His service is that one thing needful of which our Lord spoke in the Gospel.

It must be an easy service, as well because of His immense compassion as because of our unhappy weakness. It would be doing a dishonor to His goodness to suppose He has made the way to his favor difficult, or that He does not desire to save countless multitudes of His fallen creatures. It would be an unfilial reverence to our dear and loving Creator, to imagine that His service would not be easy and delightful.

But it must not only be the easiest of services, it must be the noblest also. We must not offer to God except of our best. It must be the noblest, as for Him who is noble beyond word or thought, and it must be the noblest as ennobling us who serve Him, and making us more like Himself. It must be the happiest of services. For what is God but infinite beatitude and eternal joy? All that is bright and happy comes from Him. There can be nothing melancholy, nothing gloomy, nothing harsh, nothing unwilling, in the service of such a Father and Creator. Our worship must be happy in itself, happy in look and in expression, happy in blitheness and in promptitude and in beautiful decorum; and it must be also such a worship, as while it gladdens the tenderness of God, and glorifies His paternal fondness, shall also fill our souls with that abounding happiness in Him, which is our main strength in all well-doing and in all holy suffering.

It must be a service also which calls out and occupies the whole of man. There must not be a sense of our bodies, nor a faculty of our minds, nor an affection of our hearts, not a thing that we can do, nor a thing that we can suffer, but this service must be able to absorb it, and transform it into itself. We

must not only worship God always, but the whole of us must worship God.

It must be a service also which in a sense shall comprehend God, and embrace the incomprehensible. It must honor all His perfections, and all of them at once, even while it sees God, rather as Himself universal perfection, than as having any distinct perfections. It must not worship His mercy to the detriment of His justice; it must not lose sight of His jealousy in His liberality, nor lightly esteem His sanctity because of His facility in pardoning. It must be a service whose direct effect must be union. For the creature tends to close union with the Creator, and union alone is the perfection of all true worship. Finally this service or worship, as it is union, must last and outlive, and take up into itself and develop and magnify all other graces. We do not anticipate the least objection to any of the requirements specified above; and numerous as they are, there is one spirit, one worship, one temper, one act, one habit, one word, which at once satisfies all of them in the completest way possible to a finite creature. That one word is love. The creature can not serve the Creator except with a service of love. Love is the soul of worship, the foundation of reverence, the life of good works, the remission of sins, the increase of holiness, and the security of final perseverance. Love meets the first of our requirements; for of all services it is the easiest. Its facility has passed into a proverb. It is also the noblest and the happiest of services; the noblest because it is the least mercenary, the happiest because it is the most voluntary. It is the only one which calls out and occupies the whole

man. Love alone fulfils all the commandments at once, and is the perfection of all our duties. Fear when exclusive denies mercy, and familiarity weakens reverence, when the familiarity is not profoundly based on love; whereas love settles the qualities and rights of all the attributes of God, enthrones them all, adores them all, and is nourished in exceeding gladness by them all. Love also and alone accomplishes union; and while faith dawns into sight, and hope ends in everlasting contentment, love alone abides, outliving, taking up into itself, developing and magnifying all other graces, consummating mystical oneness with God.

In all ages it has been a temptation to good and thoughtful men, and the speculations of modern philosophy have perhaps now increased their number, to take inadequate views of God's love. Nothing is more fatal to the soul nor dishonorable to God. The world with the sun extinguished, and the hideous black moon whirling round our benighted planet, is but a feeble picture of what life becomes to a susceptible conscience which puts God's love of man too low. Take what views we will of grace, it must come to this, that the immensity of God's love is our only security. Because He is our Creator He must love us; His love must be immense; He must desire the salvation of every one of His rational creatures; He must judge every single soul that maliciously eludes the embrace of His merciful longing and escapes from Him into outer darkness; He must all but offer violence to our free will in order to save us; His own glory must be in the multitude who are saved, and in the completeness of their salvation. True it is that

we have no name for the feeling with which one must regard a being whom we have called out of nothing; we may call it paternal love, or by the name of any other angelic or human love; and yet we know that it must be a feeling far transcending in height and depth and comprehensiveness, in kind, endurance, and degree, all loving ties which we can conceive. Surely, when reason tells us all was meant in love, and that He who meant that love was God, we may well trust Him for details which we can not understand, or for apparent contradictions which should not make a son's heart fail, or head doubt. Oh! uncertain and distrustful soul! God be with you in those not disloyal misgivings, which ailment of body or turn of mind seem to make in your case inevitable. The mystery of Creation is the fountain of your pains. As it has been your poison, so take it as your remedy. Meditate long, meditate humbly, on what it is to have a Creator, and comfort will come at last. If broad daylight should never be yours on this side the grave, He will hold your feet in the twilight that they shall not stumble, and at last with all the more love and all the more speed as well, He will fold you to His bosom who is Himself the light eternal.

CHAPTER III.

WHY GOD LOVES US.

Reason and revelation, science and theology, nature grace, and glory, alike establish the infallible truth, that God loves His own creatures, and loves them only as God can love. The question is why He loves us; and our first step towards an answer must be to examine the character and degree of this love. Let us see what God's love of us is like.

In the first place it passes all example. We have nothing to measure it by, nothing to compare it with. It is without parallel, without similitude. It is based upon His own eternal goodness, which we do not understand. This leads us to its next feature, that it does not resemble human love, either in kind or in degree. It does not answer to the description of a creature's love. It manifests itself in different ways. It can not be judged by the same principles. We can not rise to the idea of it by successive steps of greater or less human love. The ties of paternal, fraternal, conjugal affection all express truths about the divine love; but they not only express them in a very imperfect way, they also fall infinitely short of the real truth, of the whole truth. This is our third feature of it, that not even a glorified soul can ever under-

stand it. If even they who see God can not comprehend His love, what manner of love must it necessarily be? And yet it is ours, our own possession; and God's one desire is, by hourly influxes of grace, to increase that which is already incalculable, to enrich us with an apparently unspeakable abundance of that whose least degree is beyond the science of arch-angels. It is another feature of this love, that it seems so to possess God as to make Him insensible to reduplicated wrongs, and to set one attribute against another. There is nothing like God's love, except God's unity. It is the whole of God. Mercy must be risked by the permission of evil. That choice perfection of the Most High, His intolerably shining sanctity, must be exposed to inevitable outrage by the freedom of created wills. Only love must be satisfied. The most stupendous schemes of redemption shall seem to tax the infinity of wisdom so as to satisfy justice, provided only that the satisfaction be not made at the expense of love. Love appears—Oh! these poor human words!—to stand out from the equality of the divine perfections. Yet even love, for love's own sake, will come down from the eminence of its dignity. It will take man's love as a return for itself. It will count that for a return, which bears no resemblance to the thing returned, either in kind or in degree. The mutual love of God and man is truly a friendship, of which the reciprocity is all on one side. Compared to the least fraction of God's enormous love of us, what is all the collective love He receives from angels, and from men, but as less than the least drop in the boundless sea! Hence we may well reckon as a fifth feature of this love that its

grandeur is a trial even to the faith which finds no difficulty in the mystery of the undivided Trinity. If we have had to work for God, have we not found more men puzzled and tempted by the love of God, than by any other article of the faith? Indeed most of the temptations against the faith, when properly analyzed, resolve themselves into temptations arising from the seeming excesses of divine love. It is the excessive love of the Incarnation and the Passion which makes men find it hard to believe those mysteries. We confess it seems to us that he who, on reflection, can receive and embrace those two propositions, that God loves us, and that God desires our love, can find nothing difficult hereafter in the wonders of theology. Another feature of this love is that it is eternal, which is in itself an inexplicable mystery. As there never was a moment when God was not in all the plenitude of His self-sufficient majesty, so there never was a moment when He did not love us. He loved us not only in the gross as His creatures, not only as atoms in a mass, as units in a multitude, all grouped together, and not taken singly; but He loved us individually. He loved us with all those distinctions and individualities which make us ourselves, and prevent our being any but ourselves. Once more. The seventh feature of this love which God bears us, is that it is in every way worthy of Himself, and the result of His combined perfections. It would be of course, an intolerable impiety to suppose the contrary. If it be a finite love where is its limit? If it went to the Crucifixion, who can say where it will not go, if need should be? If it be a love short of immense, who has ever exhausted it? Look at it in

heaven at this moment—it is rolling like countless silver oceans into countless spirits and unnumbered souls. Ages will pass uncounted, and still the fresh tides will roll. If His love be mutable, when did it change? Is a whole past eternity no warrant for its perseverance? Is not fidelity its badge and token, a fidelity which is like no created thing although we call it by a human name? Is it not also a benignant love? A merciful love? A just love? Is it not a love which directs the whole providence of God, and makes His absolute dominion over us our most perfect freedom? And, finally, is it not its very characteristic that it should be itself our end, our reward, our consummate joy in God? Thus it is the result of His combined perfections, a sort of beautiful external parable of His incommunicable unity.

But we have next to seek the reasons of this love. The first thing which strikes us is that man is in himself nothingness. His body has been formed of the dust of the earth, and his soul has been directly created out of nothing by God Himself. We have simply nothing of our own but the disgrace of our origin. There is not a gift of our nature, but if God loves it, He is only loving what is His own, and which in the first instance came to us from His love. There can be nothing, therefore, in our own being to love us for, when that very being is nothing more than the effect of a pre-existing love.

Moreover, when God had once called us into life our extreme littleness seems a bar against any claim to His love founded on what we are in ourselves. We are only a speck even amidst rational creatures. And if we are mere atoms in the huge mass of men

now living, what are we compared to all the multitudes of men who have ever lived, or the enormous hosts who are yet to live before the judgment day? And even now there are the angels, and who shall tell their number? What have we to present to the eye of our Creator, but an almost indescribable insignificance?

If there is any thing positive about us at all, it is our badness. To our nothingness we have contrived to add rebellion. That really is something of our own. We have thoroughly mastered with our understandings the difference between right and wrong, and have deliberately chosen the last and rejected the first. We have looked God's commandments in the face and then broken them. Grace has come to us with quite a sensible heat and force, and we have summoned up our power of will and resisted it. We have neglected God and outraged Him also. We have at once disobeyed Him, and forgotten Him. We have both ignored Him and yet insulted Him as well. All this is our own. There is no one to share it with us. Truly we are wonderful creatures to have done so much in so short a time; to be able, indeed, to do such things at all. Yet are we making out a very promising case for a title to eternal love?

We have said there was no one to share these miserable prerogatives with us. It is true, and yet it is not true either. For, think awhile. Has not Jesus at least offered to share them? He offered to take all this horrible accumulation of rebellion and self-will, and make it His own, and to give His sufferings for it, and to pay His blood to rescue us from the intolerable debt of fire which we had wilfully and scorn-

fully incurred. And we were too glad to accept such an offer of almost fabulous love. And then in a little while, leaving all that old debt on Him, we left His service also. We took back our rights, we re-entered upon the exercise of our unhappy prerogatives, and, trampling mercy under foot now, in addition to the other divine perfections we had outraged before, we once more earned for ourselves an endless death, and preferred to the holy love of God, the blackness of everlasting fire. And perhaps this process has been repeated a score of times in our short lives, or a score of scores of times. And certainly such conduct is all our own. An angel never had the opportunity given him of such fresh choice of evil. Here is the first time in which we come in sight of any thing which belongs undoubtedly to ourselves as men; and it were strange indeed if such excess of guilt should be the cause of such exceeding love.

But if, instead of being such incredible sinners, we were equal both in our faculties and our innocence to the highest angels, should we be much better able to establish our right and title to the inestimable love of God? What can we do for God? What can we add to Him? What can we give Him which He does not possess already, and possess to an infinite extent, and with an infinite enjoyment? The most magnificent of the angels is no help to God. But we are not magnificent angels. We are but the most miserable of men, relapsed sinners, even now perhaps only half repentant, with a most cowardly repentance.

If then we must judge of ourselves by human rather than angelic principles, let us apply these human measures to our actual service of our Maker. What

is our service of God like? Let us for a moment put aside from God, the consideration that He is God. He is our Father, our Master, our Benefactor, our Friend. In His immense longevity He has been busy doing us good. It seems to have been His one occupation. Figures could not put down the number of graces He has given and is hourly giving to us. It is not easy to tell what He has been to us. Suffice it to say that this ancient earth has never seen a Father like this Father, or a Master half so kind, or a Benefactor more prodigal or more self-forgetting, or a Friend more ardently romantic in His attachment. And how do we return it? A certain amount of pious feeling, a scant obedience of a few easy commandments, a respect for His expressed wishes when they do not too much clash with our own interests, a fluctuating quantity of prayer and of thanksgiving, but which engrosses us so little that we are generally thinking of something else all the time. This is what we do for Him in a very irregular and perfunctory kind of way. And if we ourselves were good-natured human fathers, should we be satisfied if our sons did as much for us as we do for God, and no more? If a friend of seven years' standing repaid thus our love and loyalty, should we not think his friendship and his service almost insulting? But all the while it is God, not merely a friend and benefactor, but God whom we are thus treating, with His ten thousand other ties upon us, and His incomparably greater tenderness, and His absolutely eternal love!

But it is time to close. We have seen with what a love God loves us, and we have asked why it is He loves us. It must be for reasons to be found either

on man's side or on God's side. Not on man's side, for he in himself is nothingness; he is but a speck amid even rational creations. To his nothingness he has added rebellion, and in no way can he add any thing to God. Even on human principles his very service of God is almost insulting. We have therefore to look for the reason on God's side. Infinite justice would lead Him to punish us. Infinite sanctity would turn away from us in displeasure. Infinite beauty would be revolted, and infinite wisdom be disappointed. Infinite power would regard us as contemptible, and pass us over. Infinite truth would contemplate us as an hypocrisy and a lie. Finally, mercy all but infinite would tire of us, and it is just the infinity of mercy which does not tire. But love is something more than not being tired.

Why then does God love us? We must answer because He created us. This then would make mercy the reason for His love. But why did He create us? Because He loved us. We are entangled in this circle, and do not see how to escape from it. But it is a fair prison. We can rest in it while we are on earth; and if we are never to know any thing more, then we will make our home in it for eternity. Certainly the mystery does not fill our minds with light; at least not with such light as we can communicate; but, which is far more, it sets our hearts on fire.

CHAPTER IV.

OUR MEANS OF LOVING GOD.

When we return the love of another, it very much concerns us to know what kind and amount of love it is which we have to return. At the risk of repetition we must therefore briefly sum up the love of God to man. God's love of His creatures is not the fruit of His mercy or of any of His divine perfections by themselves. His love of us is part of His natural goodness, and His natural goodness is simply the excellence of His divine nature considered in itself. God's goodness is threefold. He is good by reason of the perfection of His nature, and this is His natural goodness. He is good also by reason of His sanctity, and this is His moral goodness. He is good also by reason of His beneficence which is called His benignity. But in reality, this last goodness is simply a part of the first, a necessary consequence of the perfection of His nature, of His natural goodness; so that love of creatures, or His divine benignity, is part of the perfection of the divine nature.

Every relation in which God stands to us, furnishes us with new and constraining motives to love Him with a fresh and daily beginning love.

First of all, we are God's subjects. There are none

of us who desire to question His dominion. We should be simply ruined, annihilated, if we were not in His care and keeping. Obedience to Him is safer and happier for us than any liberty of which we could dream. His government is one of love. His facility in pardoning is something beyond compare. No earthly king was ever like Him in His providence over His subjects. Every want is foreseen. The vast complications both of nature and grace fit close to the individual life, shield it from every danger, penetrate it with a balm and sweetness which give vigor and delight, and make each man feel as if the world were made for him alone.

But we are His servants also. He is our Master as well as our King. All servitude is full of motives of humility. But what is it which makes a master so justly dear to a good servant? It is his considerateness. And who is so considerate as God? He never lets us be oppressed with work. He never disregards our fatigue. He cheers us under failure. His forbearance is one incessant miracle. We should not keep a servant a month who treated us as we treat Him. Awkward, ungracious, reluctant, it is thus we always meet the courtesies of His abundant love. As to wages, both those He has bound Himself to give, and those which come in the shape of frequent gifts, the bounty of an earthly master is to His munificence, as the poverty of the creature is to the wealth of the Creator.

God is our friend. It requires an act of faith, and not a little act to say so. But so it is, the Infinite, the Omnipotent, the All Holy is our bosom friend. See what a friend He is! He acts as if He thinks

better of us than we think even of ourselves. He can suspect nothing; for He is God. He forgives offences as fast as we commit them, and appears to forget as soon as He has forgiven. His love is always as fresh to us as it was at the beginning. Whenever we will, we can be friends with God, and He gives Himself up to His friends with such exclusiveness, that we feel as if He belonged to us alone, and that all of Him was ours.

God is our Father also, and we are the children of His predilection. Truants and prodigals, no longer worthy to be called His sons, and yet still His heirs, still the objects of His most lavish paternal tenderness. Did ever parental love remain true love, and yet punish so unfrequently as He, or when it punished, did it with so light a hand, or with a sorrow more reluctant? Does not each chastisement seem worth far more than the pain that it gives, by the increase of His love, and the new inventions of His favor with which He follows it? O, who is such a Father as God is! The Eternal Father, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of His creatures, the Father from whom all fatherhood is named in heaven and on earth.

He is our Creator also, and we are His creatures, the least and lowest of those who can glorify Him with a reasonable worship, and yet whom He has loved above the angels, and chosen to be nigher to Himself. He has chosen us, and choice is the highest act of love. Our creation is our share of the infinite goodness of God. What should we be without it? Can any love of ours be otherwise than a poor return for such a love as His?

But we are not only God's creatures, we are His elect as well. He made as it were a second choice of us in Jesus Christ. He foresaw our fall. He beheld not only what Adam's fall entailed upon us, but He saw our own actual sins and guilt. He did not exaggerate our shame, but He knew it as not all men and angels together could have known it. He penetrated its unbearable corruption. Nevertheless it was not enough to repel His electing love. He chose us to be bathed in the Precious Blood of His Incarnate Son. He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and unspotted in His sight, in love!

Can more be said? Yes! there is still another tie which binds us fast to God. It is the end of what creation was the beginning; it is the consummation of God's eternal choice. It is the marriage of our souls with Him. Marriage was made a figure of the unity of God, and a shadow of Christ's union with His Church. Its love was to supersede all other ties. Yet all this is the faintest of shadows, the feeblest of figures to set forth the union of the soul with God. How shall we love Him as we ought? May we even try to love Him who has loved us with such an overwhelming love? Must not our only love be speechless fear? No! for it is the law of all creation, the beautiful benignant law, the unexpected, the incredible commandment—Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with thy whole soul, with thy whole heart, with thy whole mind, with thy whole strength!

As far as we can divide one sort of love from another, where in reality each more or less involves the other, it seems we can love God with seven different

kinds of love; the loves, namely, of benevolence, of complacency, of preference, of condolence, of gratitude, of desire, and of simple adoration.

The love of benevolence is one which has been commonly practiced by the saints, and often has seemed at best mere poetry to those who love God less fervently. There is a strange pleasure in it, from our putting ourselves in an impossible position toward God, in order to confer it on Him. So it seems. Yet in reality this love of benevolence is the fruit of a holy humility, too deep for words, almost too deep for tears. By the love of benevolence, we wish God all the immense joy of His unimaginable perfections. We know that He possesses it without our wishing it. But it is an expression of our love, not in words only but in inward sentiment which is in His sight an act. Another while, we wish Him all increase of His accidental glory, and our wish is efficacious prayer, and obtains for Him a real augmentation of that particular glory. All this, which the saints have reduced to as many practices as there were saints to practice it, is the love of benevolence.

The love of complacency is of a different disposition. It is content with God. It not only wants nothing more, but it wants Him as He is. Complacency fixes its eye upon what it knows of God with intense delight and with intense tranquillity. It rejoices that He is what He is. Whole hours of prayer pass, and it has done nothing else but tell Him this. It leans on God, and at last seems lost in Him, absorbed in quiet gladness, and a rapture of holy thought. Thence once more it wakes, and seeing there is none like unto God simply because He is God, and for no oth-

er cause, it bursts forth into passionate rejoicings, that He is not only what He is, but always has been, always will be, what He is, that He is of a truth and shall be, and alone can be, eternally and victoriously God. These are the delightful occupations of complacent love.

The love of preference or esteem hardly aims so high. It is more mixed up with thoughts of creatures. It compares God with all other things, as if it had tried them—grown weary of their falsehood, and convicted them of vanity. It tramples them under foot, and makes steps of their ruins whereby it may rise to God. It gives God His right place in the world, which the multitude of men do not give Him. What is practical religion but the giving God His right place in the heart and in our life? This love expresses itself by the energetic abundance of its good works, by its active zeal, by a most intense hatred of sin. It is a love which, while it worships all the attributes of God, delights above all things to extol His sovereignty.

The love of condolence differs widely again from this. It looks upon God as wronged, and outraged, and in sorrow, as if He needed help and were asking for an ally. Its tendency is to wed His interests, and to become strangely susceptible about His honor. It is a jealous love, so that men are apt to take umbrage at it. It is very discreet, but not with a discretion which the world approves. Its discretion leads it to keep awake itself and to awaken others, lest God should pass by unseen, and men should not uncover as He passed. It has one life-long grief, and that grief is the abundance and effrontery of sin. Sin

is a sharp pain to it. It does not make it angry, but it makes it weep. Its heart sickens with the goings on of men, and it tries to shroud God in the light of its own affectionate compassion. O happy they who love with such a love! To them—true, dovelike souls—especially belongs that tender benediction, “Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.”

If the quiet eye and the profound heart of the contemplative Mary delights in that love of condolence, the love of gratitude better suits the external diligence of the active Martha. The love of gratitude is pre-eminently a mindful love. It meditates fondly on the past as Jacob did. It sings of old mercies, and makes much of them, likè David in the Psalms. Where another has his sins continually before him, a soul possessed with the love of gratitude is perpetually haunted by a remembrance of past benefits; and his abiding sorrow for sin is a sort of affectionate and self-reproachful reaction from his wonder at the abundant loving-kindness of God. The hideousness of sin is all the more brought out, when the light of God's love is thrown so strongly upon it. Promptitude of obedience, heroic effort, and gay perseverance, these are all tokens of the love of gratitude. It is loyal to God. Loyalty is the distinguishing feature of its service. It is constantly on the lookout for opportunities, and makes them when it can not find them, to testify its allegiance to God; not as if it was doing any great thing, but as if it was making payment, part payment and tardy payment, by little instalments for the immensity of His love. Happy is the man whose life is one long *Te Deum*. Joy is not a solitary thing, and he will come at last to his Master's

feet, bringing many others rejoicing with him, the resplendent trophies of his grateful love.

But the love which has most to do with self is the love of desire. Saints and sinners, the perfect and the imperfect, the young and the old, the penitent and the innocent, all must meet in the sanctuary of this love, and draw waters with gladness from its celestial fountains. What rational creature but must desire God and desire Him with an infinite and irresistible desire! O sweet thirst for God! Fair love of supernatural desire! Thou canst wean us better far from earth, and teach us better the nothingness of human things, than the cold, slow experience of wise old age, or the swift, sharp science of suffering, loss, and pain?

There is still another love. We hardly know whether to call it the child of heaven or of earth. It is the love of adoration. It finds no satisfaction except in worship. It is oblivious of itself as being one with God. Its life is wonder, silence, ecstasy. The operations of grace are simplified into one, and the power of grace which is concentrated in that one is above words; and that single action is the production of an unspeakable self-abasement. As the morning sky is all suffused with pearly hues from the unrisen sun; so is the mind, though still on earth, in this love of adoration, all silently suffused, and flushed, and mastered, by a most exquisite repose, which can come alone from that Beatific Vision which has not yet risen upon the soul.

CHAPTER V.

OUR ACTUAL LOVE OF GOD.

A voluntary thought and a deliberate desire are not less actions in the sight of God than the words of our mouth or the operations of our hands. Let us examine our lives first as to the *amount* of love to God which they exhibit, and secondly as to the manner in which we show our love.

There are twenty-four hours in the day, so many days in the week, and so many weeks in the year. We have various occupations, and manifold ways of spending our time; and the most careless among us must have some confused and general notion of the way in which his time is distributed. Now we know that the service of God is the grand thing, or rather that it is the only thing about us which is great at all. What amount of our time is spent upon it? How many hours of the day are passed in prayer and spiritual reading or in other direct spiritual exercises? Of the time necessarily expended upon our worldly avocations or the claims of society, how much is spent with any recollection of Him, or with any actual intention to do our common actions for His glory? Can we return a satisfactory answer to these

questions? Furthermore, we know that it is essential to our love of God that we should appreciate Him above all things. Does our practice show that this is any thing but a form of words with us? Would strangers, who looked critically at our daily lives, be obliged to say that, whatever fault we had, it was plain that we put no such price on any thing as on God? When we look into the interests and affections of our busy, crowded hearts, is it plain that if the love of God does not reign there in solitary, unmingled splendor, at least it takes easy, obvious, and acknowledged preference of all our other loves? This is not asking much, but can we answer as we should wish? Again our actions are perfectly multitudinous. If we reckon both the outward and the inward ones they are almost as numerous as the beatings of our pulse. How many of them are for God? I do not say how many are distinctly religious, but how many are at all and in any sense for God? How many in the hundred? Even if we are quite clear that a virtual intention has really got vigor and vitality enough to carry us over the breadth of a whole day, and to push its way through the crowd of things we have to think, to say, to do, to suffer,—and this is a very large assumption—is this virtual intention in the morning to absolve us from the necessity of any further advertence to God, and must it not also have been made in the morning with a very considerable degree of intensity, in order to propel it for so long as twenty-four hours, through such a resisting medium as we know our daily lives to be? Are we quite comfortable about this? Are we sure of our view about virtual intention, and without mis-

givings, and have we found our theory work well in times gone by?

God does not have His own way in the world. What He gets, He has to fight for. What is true of the world at large, is true also of our own hearts and lives. Though we love God, and most sincerely, He has to struggle for our love. He has to contend for the mastery over our affections. The preferences of our corrupt nature are not for Him, or for His concerns. Thus it happens almost daily that His claims clash with those of self or of the world. We have to choose between the two, and give the preference to one over the other. We are forever having Christ and Barabbas offered to the freedom of our election. Now do we always give the preference to God? Or if not always, because of surprises, impulses, impetuosities, or sudden weaknesses, at least do we never wilfully, deliberately, and with advertence, prefer any thing else to God, and give Him the second place? And of the innumerable times in which this conflict occurs, in what proportion of times does God carry off the victory? And when He does, is it any easy victory? Or has He to lay long siege to our hearts, and bring up reinforcement after reinforcement of fresh and untired grace, until at last it looks as if He were almost going to throw Himself on His omnipotence and restrain the freedom of our will? Or again, let us look upon the degree of application which we bestow on what we really do for God. Let us confront the carefulness and forethought and energy and perseverance which we bestow upon our temporal interests, or the earthly objects of our love, with those which characterize our spiritual exercises.

And will the result of the examination be altogether what we should desire?

So much for the *amount* of our love for God. Let us now console ourselves by looking at the *manner* and spirit in which we pay God this little love. Is the following an unkind picture of ourselves? We serve God grudgingly, as if He were exacting. We are slow to do what we know He most desires, because it is an effort to ourselves. We cling to our own liberty, and we feel the service of God more or less of a captivity. Our whole demeanor and posture in religion is not as if we felt God was asking too little, or as if we were most anxious to do more than He required. We serve Him intermittingly, though perseverance is what He so specially desires. We have fits and starts, pious weeks, or devout months, and then times of remissness of effort, of coldness; then a fresh awakening, a new start, and then a slackening again. It is as if loving God went against the grain, as if we had to constrain ourselves to love Him, as if it was an exertion which could not be kept up continuously, as if human holiness could never be any thing better than endless beginnings and trials which are always falling short of the mark. Thus we also love God rarely, under pressure on great occasions, at startling times, or when we have a sensible need of Him. All this looks as if we did not love Him for His own sake, but for ourselves, or for fear, or because it is prudent and our duty. There is unmistakably a want of heart in the whole matter.

I am afraid to go on with the picture, lest I should have to ask myself at last, What is left of the Chris-

tian life? But we have seen enough to confess of our love of God, that not only is what we give very little, but that even that little is given in the most ungraceful and unlovelike of ways. Surely this is a confession not to be made by words, which are not equal to the task, but only by silent tears, while we lie prostrate before the throne of Him, whom, strange to say, we really do love most tenderly even while we slight Him

CHAPTER VI.

IN WHAT WAY GOD REPAYS OUR LOVE.

Let us study in detail the way in which God repays that poor and fitful and ungenerous love of which we ourselves are more than half ashamed. Let us inquire when He repays us, with what He repays us, and in what manner He repays us.

First of all, when does He repay us? He does not keep us waiting for our recompenses. We know well that one additional degree of sanctifying grace is of more price than all the magnificence of the universe. The objects upon which we often fasten our affections or employ our ambition, during long years of concentrated vigilance and persevering toil, are less worthy of our endeavors, and less precious in the possession, than one single particle of sanctifying grace. Yet, let us suppose that a momentary temptation has assailed us, and we have resisted it, or that we have lifted up our hearts for an instant in faith and love to God, or that for the sake of Christ we have done some trifling, unselfish thing, scarcely has the action escaped us before then and instantly the heavens have opened invisibly, and the beauty, power, and marvel of sanctifying grace has passed with viewless flight and with insensible ingress into our soul.

Moreover, all through life, our mere preservation of the gift of faith entitles us always to have the grace of God at hand when it is wanted, preventing and anticipating the rapid and subtle movements of our spiritual enemies; and even when it is not especially wanted, because we are not under the pressure of circumstances or in critical occasions, it is most likely that we are always insensibly receiving grace, except when we sleep; so that we live in a world of grace, and breathe its atmosphere unconsciously, thinking as little of it as of the air we breathe in order to support our natural life.

Joy and sorrow have each of them their own wants and trials, and peculiar laws; and who has not experienced the ready goodness of God in both of them? Sorrow when borne even with ordinary patience has its own rewards from God at once, rewards both of nature and of grace. What can be more beautiful than the way in which He calculates our weakness, and then measures out our sorrows, and then rains vehement storms of grace upon our fainting wills? But we only see this now and then, and in dusty, indistinct perspective. In eternity we shall behold our past life in God, and what a thrilling revelation it will be! But is not this undeniably true of ourselves, so far as we have gone in life, that we have had far less sorrow and pain than we are quite conscious we could bear, that our powers of bearing have been sensibly augmented while the cross was on us, that we can look back upon chapters of our past life about which we distinctly feel that with our present grace we could not live them over again, that the fruits of sorrow have always been tenfold brighter in the issue

than the darkness was ever deepened in the process, and finally that in the retrospect the very sorrows themselves have been full of joys, exotic joys, whose large leaves, and waxen blossoms, and long-lasting perfumes show that they were grown in heaven and not on earth? Yet these are only the present rewards of grief, the earthly blessings of those who mourn.

Look at death which is a simple punishment! Can any created intelligence conceive of any thing more terrible than to fall into the hands of God for the single solitary purpose of being punished? And we might have thought that death would be like this, being the first-born child of sin. Yet how should we have miscalculated the love of God! The deaths of His servants are among the most valued jewels of His crown. We know that grand act has peculiar needs, peculiar distresses, and that the invisible and visible world forget their boundaries at the death-bed, and war together in dread conflict of which, for the most part, the dying eye is the sole spectator. Yet when are God's graces and indulgences more numerous, more triumphant, more accessible, than in that dreadful hour? Grace makes a very sunset of what to nature is impenetrable darkness, and the plaintive strains of the Miserere merge in spite of our humanity into songs of triumph.

Now all these are present rewards, ways in which God repays on earth our love of Him. They are but samples of what is incessant, abundant, superfluous, all through life. But after all this life is not the time of His recompenses. He warns us not to expect them. Is it then that His love is so great that He can not help Himself, and that his nature is under the blessed

necessity of loving and giving? Oh! even the most desolate of men may be so sure of His paternal love that they may remember that eternity can be no long way off, and will repay the waiting.

But if the promptitude of His payment is in itself a proof of the greatness of God's love, still more strongly is that consoling fact brought out when we consider with what He pays us. The blessings of nature, the gifts of grace, the rewards of glory,—who is sufficient to declare the number, the beauty, the greatness, and the wonder of these things?

But all blessings of nature and of grace are only in an imperfect sense the rewards of the Creator. The Kingdom of Glory is the theatre of His recompense. It is in order to extend that Kingdom that the grace given us is so ineffably beyond what is due to our nature. But how shall we hope to measure the Kingdom of glory when it is to be measured only by the Divine Magnificence?

Both a prophet and an apostle join in telling us that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor man's heart conceived, what God has prepared for them that love Him. When the bodies of the just rise at the general resurrection, with their senses spiritualized and rendered capable of pleasures which do not fall within their province now, and with perhaps many new senses developed in the immortal body, which were unknown in its mortal days, the pure pleasure of these glorified senses must be something quite beyond the power of our imagination to picture to itself.

Yet the heavenly joys of the illuminated understanding far transcend the thrill of the glorified senses. The contemplation of heavenly beauty and of heav-

only truth must indeed be beyond all our earthly standards of comparison. The clearness and instantaneousness of all the mental processes, the complete exclusion of error, the unbroken serenity of the vision, the facility of embracing whole worlds and systems in one calm, searching, exhausting glance, the divine character and utter holiness of all the truths presented to our view,—these are broken words which serve at least to show what we may even now indistinctly covet in that bright abode of everlasting bliss. Intelligent intercourse with the angelic choirs, and the incessant transmission of the divine splendors through them to our minds, can not be thought of without our perceiving that the keen pleasures and deep sensibilities of the intellectual world on earth are but poor, thin, unsubstantial shadows of the exulting, immortal life of our glorified minds above.

Yet what is all this compared with one hour of the magnificences of celestial love? Oh! to turn our whole souls upon God, and souls thus expanded, and thus glorified; to have our affections multiplied and magnified a thousand-fold, and then girded up and strengthened by immortality to bear the beauty of God to be unveiled before us; and even so strengthened to be rapt by it into a sublime amazement which has no similitude on earth; to be carried away by the torrents of love, and yet be firm in the most steadfast adoration; to have passionate desire, yet without tumult or disturbance; to have the most bewildering intensity along with an unearthly calmness; to lose ourselves in God, and then find ourselves there more our own than ever; to love rapturously, and to be loved again still more rapturously, and still the great

waters of God's love to flow over us and overwhelm us, until the vehemence of our impassioned peace, and the daring vigor of our yearning adoration, reach beyond the sight of our most venturesome imagining;—O! my poor soul, what canst thou know of this, of these beautiful necessities of thy exceeding love, which shall only satisfy itself in endless alternations, now of silence, and now of song?

These are the rewards of God, these the ways in which He repays our love. What can be more wonderful than the contrast between man paying God on earth, and God paying man in heaven? We have looked at man's side in the last chapter. We have seen the misery and unworthiness, the scantiness and the meanness, the coldness, the reluctance, the distraction, and the ungracious delays of the creature with the Creator. And then comes death! A good death is one in which we feel that hitherto we have never done any good at all, but in which we seriously, though with alarming self-distrust, intend if we survive to begin to do good. We die, and in dying we fall into the hands of His justice, and then, fresh wonder of creative love! we find far more than mercy. If there could be shame in heaven, how should we be overwhelmed with confusion appearing there with the miserable tribute of our interested love, and of our wisely selfish fear! But how does the Creator, the King of kings, receive His tribute? He bursts forth all divinely into triumph because a half-converted sinner has condescended to accept His grace. He bids the angels rejoice, and hold high feast through all the empyrean heaven, not because He has evolved some new and wonder-stirring system out of nothing,

not because He has called into being some million worlded nebula, and cast upon it such an effulgence of His beauty as throws all the rest of His creation into the shade—but because one wretched, unworthy, offensive man has, after an immense amount of divine eloquence and pleading, consented to take the first step towards not being damned; an outcast of human society who has drunk his fill of every vice, has graciously condescended, for fear of hell, to accept heaven. These are the Creator's triumphs, the ovations of everlasting and of all-wise mercy.

What then is the conclusion to which we come about this repaying of our love by God? It is simply this. In the first place, he has made His glory coincide with our interests. Secondly, from a privilege, He lowers love into a precept, and this one act is a complete revelation of Himself. Thirdly, He so puts our interests into His, that it is hard to look at His interests only without falling into heresy. Do these conclusions solve the questions we have been asking? No, but they lead to the one answer of all, only that ending as we began, the answer is itself a mystery. St. John states it; no one can explain it; earth would be hell without it; we shall live upon it in heaven, yet never learn all that is in it. God is love!

CHAPTER VII.

THE WORLD.

The question of worldliness is a very difficult one and one which we would gladly have avoided, had it been in our power to do so. But it is in too many ways connected with our subject, to allow of its being passed over in silence. In the first place, a thoughtful objector will naturally say, If the relation between the Creator and the creature is such as has been laid down, and, furthermore, if it is as manifest and undeniable as it is urged to be, how comes it to pass that it is not more universally, or at least more readily, admitted than it is? Almost all the phenomena of the world betray a totally opposite conviction, and reveal to us an almost unanimous belief in men, that they are on quite a different footing with God from that one which is here proclaimed to be the only true and tenable one. There must be at least some attempt to explain this discrepancy between what we see, and what we are taught. The explanation, we reply, is to be found in what Christians call worldliness. It is this which stands in the way of God's honor, this which defrauds Him of the tribute due to Him from His creatures, this which even blinds their

eyes to His undeniable rights and prerogatives. How God's own world comes to stand between Himself and the rational soul, how friendship with it is enmity with Him—indeed an account of the whole matter must be gone into, in order to show, first, that the influence of the world does account for the non-reception of right views about God, and secondly that the world is in no condition to be called as a witness because of the essential falsehood of its character. This identical falsehood about God is its very life, energy, significance, and condemnation. The right view of God is not unreal because the world ignores it. On the contrary, it is because it is real that the unreal world ignores it, and the world's ignoring it is, so far forth, an argument in favor of the view.

There is a hell already upon earth; there is something which is excommunicated from God's smile. It is not altogether matter, nor yet altogether spirit. It is not man only, nor Satan only, nor is it exactly sin. It is an infection, an inspiration, an atmosphere, a life, a coloring matter, a pageantry, a fashion, a taste, a witchery, an impersonal, but a very recognizable, system. None of these names suit it, and all of them suit it. Scripture calls it "The World." God's mercy does not enter into it. All hope of its reconciliation with Him is absolutely and eternally precluded. Repentance is incompatible with its existence. The sovereignty of God has laid the ban of the empire upon it; and a holy horror ought to seize us when we think of it. Meanwhile its power over the human creation is terrific, its presence ubiquitous, its deceitfulness incredible. It can find a home under every heart beneath the poles, and it embraces with impar-

ial affection, both happiness and misery. It can not be damned, because it is not a person, but it will perish in the general conflagration, and so its tyranny be over, and its place know it no more. We are living in it, breathing it, acting under its influences, being cheated by its appearances, and unwarily admitting its principles. Is it not of the last importance to us that we should know something of this huge evil creature, this monstrous sea-bird of evil, which flaps its wings from pole to pole, and frightens the nations into obedience by its discordant cries?

But we must not be deceived by this description. The transformations of the spirit of the world are among its most wonderful characteristics. It has its gentle voice, its winning manners, its insinuating address, its aspect of beauty and attraction; and the lighter its foot and the softer its voice, the more dreadful is its approach. It is by the firesides of rich and poor, in happy homes where Jesus is named, in gay hearts which fain would never sin. In the chastest domestic affections it can hide its poison. In the very sunshine of external nature, in the combinations of the beautiful elements—it is somehow even there. It can be dignified as well. It can call to order sin which is not respectable. It can propound wise maxims of public decency, and inspire wholesome regulations of police. It can open the churches, and intone *Te Deums* to the Majesty on high. It is often prominently, and almost pedantically, on the side of morality. Then again, it has passed into the beauty of art, into the splendor of dress, into the magnificence of furniture. Or again, there it is, with high principles on its lips, discussing the religious vocation of some

youth, and praising God and sanctity, while it urges discreet delay, and less self-trust, and more considerate submissiveness to those who love Him. It can sit on the benches of senates, and hide in the pages of good books. And yet all the while it is the same huge evil creature which was described above. Have we not reason to fear ?

Let us try to learn more definitely what the world is, the world in the Scripture sense. It seems to be a sort of spirit which has risen up from a disobedient creation, as if the results and after consequences of all the sins that ever were rested in the atmosphere, and loaded it with some imperceptible but highly powerful miasma. It can not be a person, and yet it seems as if it possessed both a mind and a will, which on the whole are very consistent, so as to disclose what might appear to be a very perfect self-consciousness. It is painless in its operations, and unerring too ; and just as the sun bids the lily be white, and the rose red, and they obey without an effort, standing side by side, with the same aspect and in the same soil, so this spirit of the world brings forth colors and shapes and scents in our different actions, without the process being cognizable to ourselves. The power of mesmerism on the reluctant will is a good type of the power of this spirit of the world upon ourselves. It is like grace, only that it is its contradictory.

This spirit is further distinguished by the evidences which it presents of a fixed view and a settled purpose. It is capricious, but for all that, there is nothing about it casual, accidental, fortuitous. It is well instructed for its end, inflexible in its logic, and making directly, no matter through what opposing me-

dium, to its ultimate results. Indeed, it is obviously informed with the wisdom and subtlety of Satan. It is his greatest capability of carrying on his war against God. It is one of those three powers to whom such dark pre-eminence is given,—the world, the flesh, and the devil; and among these three it seems to have a kind of precedence given to it, by the way in which our Lord speaks of it in the Gospel, though the line of its diplomacy has been to have itself less thought of and less dreaded than the other two; and unhappily for the interests of God, and the welfare of souls, it has succeeded. It is then pre-eminent among the enemies of God. Hence the place which it occupies in Holy Scripture. It is the world which hated Christ, the world which can not receive the Spirit, the world that loves its own, the world that rejoices because Christ has gone away, the world which He overcame, the world for which He would not pray, the world that by wisdom knew not God, the world that was not worthy of the saints, the world whose friendship is enmity with God, the world that passeth away with its lusts, the world which they who are born of God overcome, or, as the Apocalypse calls it, the world that goes wandering after the beast. Well then might St. James come to his energetic conclusion, Whosoever therefore will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God. It is remarkable also that St. John, the chosen friend of the Incarnate Word, and the Evangelist of His Divinity, should be the one of the inspired writers who speaks most often and most emphatically about the world, as if the Spirit of Jesus found something especially revolting to it in the spirit of the world.

It is this world which we have to fight against throughout the whole of our Christian course. Our salvation depends upon our unforgiving enmity against it. It is not so much that it is a sin, as that it is the capability of all sins,—the air sin breathes, the light by which it sees to do its work, the hot-bed which propagates and forces it, the instinct which guides it, the power which animates it. It has laws of its own, and tastes and principles of its own, literature of its own, a missionary spirit, a compact system, and it is a consistent whole. It is a counterfeit to the Church of God, and in the most implacable antagonism to it. And so it must be. The view which the Church takes of the world is distinct and clear, and far from flattering to its pride. It considers the friendship of the world as enmity with God. It puts all the world's affairs under its feet, either as of no consequence, or at least of very secondary importance. It has great faults to find with the effeminacy of the literary character, with the churlishness of the mercantile character, with the servility of the political character, and even with the inordinateness of the domestic character. It provokes the world by looking on progress doubtingly, and with what appears a very inadequate interest, and there is a quiet faith in its contempt for the world extremely irritating to the latter power.

The world, on the contrary, thinks that it is going to last forever. It almost assumes that there are no other interests but its own, or that if there are, they are either of no consequence, or troublesome and in the way. It thinks that there is nothing like itself anywhere, that religion was made for its convenience,

merely to satisfy a want, and must not forget itself; or if it claims more, must be put down as a rebel, or chased away as a grumbling beggar; and finally it is of opinion that, of all contemptible things, spirituality is the most contemptible, cowardly, and little. Thus the Church and the world are incompatible, and must remain so to the end.

We can not have a better idea of the uncongeniality of the world with the spirit of the Gospel, than their difference in the estimate of prosperity. All those mysterious woes which our Lord denounced against wealth, have their explanation in the dangers of worldliness. It is the peculiar aptitude of wealth, and pomp, and power, to harbor the unholy spirit of the world, to combine with it and transform themselves into it, which called forth the thrilling malediction of our Lord. Prosperity may be a blessing from God, but it may easily become the triumph of the world. And for the most part the absence of chastisement is any thing but a token of God's love. When prosperity is a blessing, it is generally a condescension to our weakness. Those are fearful words "Thou hast already received thy reward," yet how many prosperous men there are, the rest of whose lives will keep reminding us of them; the tendency of prosperity in itself is to wean the heart from God, and fix it on creatures. It gives us a most unsupernatural habit of esteeming others according to their success. As it increases, so anxiety to keep it increases also, and makes men restless, selfish, and irreligious; and at length it superinduces a kind of effeminacy of character, which unfits them for the higher and more heroic virtues of the Christian character.

This is but a sample of the different way in which the Church and the world reason.

When our B'essed Lord describes the days before the flood, and again those which shall precede the end of the world, He portrays them rather as times of worldliness than of open sin. Men were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage; and He says no more. Now none of these things are wrong in themselves. In the same way when He describes the life of the only person whom the gospel narrative follows into the abode of the lost, He sums it up as the being clothed in purple and fine linen and feasting sumptuously every day. Here again there is nothing directly sinful in the actions which He names. It surely can not be a mortal sin to have fine linen, nor will a man lose a state of grace because he feasts sumptuously every day, provided no other sins follow in the train of this soft life. The malice of it all is in its worldliness, in the fact that this was all or nearly all the lives of those before the flood, of those before the days of anti-Christ, and of the unhappy Dives. Life began and ended in worldliness. There was nothing for God. It was comprised in the pleasures of the world, it rested in them, it was satisfied by them. Its characteristic was sins of omission. Worldliness might almost be defined to be a state of habitual sins of omission. The devil urges men on to great positive breaches of the divine commandments. The passions of the flesh impel sinners to give way to their passions by such dreadful sins as catch the eyes of men, and startle them by their iniquity. Worldliness only leads to these things occasionally and by accident. It neither scandalizes

others, nor frightens the sinner himself. This is the very feature of it, which, rightly considered, ought to be so terrifying. The reaction of a great sin or the shame which follows it are often the pioneers of grace. They give self-love such a serious shock, that under the influence of it men return to God. Worldliness hides from the soul its real malice, and thus keeps at arm's length from it some of the most persuasive motives to repentance. Thus the Pharisees are depicted in the Gospel as being eminently worldly. It is worldliness, not immorality, which is put before us. There is even much of moral decency, much of respectable observance, much religious profession; and yet when our Blessed Saviour went among them, they were further from grace than the publicans and sinners. They had implicit hatred of God in their hearts already, which became explicit as soon as they saw Him. The Magdalen, the Samaritan, the woman taken in adultery,—it was these who gathered round Jesus, attracted by His sweetness, and touched by the grace which went out from Him. The Pharisees only grew more cold, more haughty, more self-opinionated, until they ended by the greatest of all sins, the crucifixion of our Lord. For worldliness, when its selfish necessities drive it at last into open sin, for the most part sins more awfully and more impenitently, than even the unbridled passions of our nature. So again there was the young man who had great possessions, and who loved Jesus when he saw Him, and wished to follow Him. He was a religious man, and with humble scrupulosity observed the commandments of God; but when our Lord told him to sell, and give the price to the poor and to follow Him, he turned

away sorrowful, and was found unequal to such a blessed vocation. Now his refusing to sell his property was surely not a mortal sin. It does not appear that our Lord considered him to have sinned by his refusal. It was the operation of worldliness. We do not know what the young man's future was; but a sad cloud of misgivings must hang over the memory of him whom Jesus invited to follow Him, and who turned away. Is he looking now in heaven upon that Face from whose mild beauty he so sadly turned away on earth?

Thus the outward aspect of worldliness is not sin. Its character is negative. It abounds in omissions. Yet throughout the Gospels our Saviour seems purposely to point to it rather than to open sin. When the young man turned away, His remark was, How hard it is for those who have riches to enter into the Kingdom of heaven. But the very fact of our Lord's thus branding worldliness with His especial reprobation is enough to show that it is in reality deeply sinful, hatefully sinful. It is a life without God in the world. It is a continual ignoring of God, a continual quiet contempt of His rights, an insolent abatement in the service which He claims from His creatures. Self is set up instead of God. The canons of human respect are more looked up to than the Divine Commandments. God is very little adverted to. He is passed over. The very thought of Him soon ceases to make the worldly man uncomfortable. Indeed, all his chief objections to religion, if he thought much about the matter, would be found to repose on his apprehension of it as restless and uncomfortable. But all this surely must represent an immensity of interior

sin. Can a man habitually forget God, and be in a state of habitual grace? Can he make up a life for himself even of the world's sinless enjoyments, such as eating, drinking, and marrying, and will not the mere omission of God from it be enough to constitute him in a state of deadly sin? At that rate a moral atheist is more acceptable to God than a poor sinner honestly but feebly fighting with some habit of vice, to which his nature and his past offences set so strongly that he can hardly lift himself up. At that rate the Pharisees in the Gospel would be the patterns for our imitation, rather than the publicans and sinners; or at least they would be as safe. Or shall we say that faith is enough to save us without charity? If a man only believes rightly, let him eat and drink and be gayly clothed, and let him care for nothing else, and at least that exclusive love of creatures, that omission of the Creator, provided only it issues in no other outward acts than his fine dinners and his expensive clothes, shall never keep his soul from heaven. His purple and his sumptuous feasting shall be his beatific vision here, and then his outward morality shall by God's mercy hand him on to his second beatific vision, the vision of the Beauty of God, and the eternal ravishment of the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity? Can this be true?

Yet on the other hand we may not make into sins what God has not made sins. How is this? O, it is the awful world of inward sin which is the horror of all this worldliness! It is possession, worse far than diabolical possession, because at once more hideous and more complete. It is the interior irreligiousness, the cold pride, the hardened heart, the depraved sense,

the real unbelief, the more than implicit hatred of God, which makes the soul of the worldly man an actual, moral, and intellectual hell upon earth, hidden by an outward show of faultless proprieties, which only make it more revolting to the Eye that penetrates the insulting disguise. The secret sins moreover of the worldly are a very sea of iniquity. Their name is legion, they can not be counted. Almost every thought is sin, because of the inordinate worship of self that is in it. Almost every step is sin, because it is treading under foot some ordinance of God. It is a life without prayer, a life without desire of heaven, a life without fear of hell, a life without love of God, a life without any supernatural habits at all. Is not hell the most natural transition from such a life as this? Heaven is not a sensual paradise. God is the joy and the beauty and the contentment there; all is for God, all from God, all to God, all in God, all round God as the beautiful central fire about which His happy creatures cluster in amazement and delight; whereas in worldliness God is the discomfort of the whole thing, an intrusion, an unseasonable thought, an inharmonious presence, like a disagreeable, uninvited guest, irritating and fatiguing us by the simple demand His presence makes on our courtesy. O surely such a man has sin in his veins instead of blood!

Worldliness then is a life of secret sins. In numberless cases open and crying sins must come at last. Still we must remember that on the whole there are two characteristics which always distinguish sins of worldliness from sins of the passions, or sins of direct diabolical temptation. The respectability which worldliness affects leads it rather to satisfy itself in

secret sins. Indeed its worship of self, its predilection for an easy life, would hinder its embarking in sins which take trouble, time, and forethought, or which run risks of disagreeable consequences, and therefore would keep it confined within a sphere of secret sins. And in the next place its love of comfort makes it so habitually disinclined to listen to the reproaches of conscience, or the solicitations of grace, that it passes into the state of a seared conscience, a deadened moral sense, with a speed which is unknown even to cruelty or sensuality.

Now every one of these phenomena of worldliness may be resolved into a forgetfulness that we are creatures. There is no look about the life of Dives that he remembered he was a creature. There might be, mingled with his characteristic good-nature which made him love his brothers so much and give alms to Lazarus, some confused notions of duty to a Creator; but any abiding sense of his being a creature, there was none. He solved the problem of the possibility of these two forgetfulnesses being separated, that of having a Creator and that of being a creature. It is this forgetfulness which is the fountain of almost all sins of omission. Wherever there is worldliness there is this forgetfulness that we are creatures; and wherever there is this forgetfulness that we are creatures, there also is worldliness.

It is hard to live in a place and avoid the spirit of it. Yet this is what we have to do. The world we can not leave till God summons us; but worldliness, which is the spirit of the world, should not be allowed to infect us. As the smell of fire had not passed upon the garments of the three children in the burning fiery

furnace, so must the odor of worldliness not pass upon our souls. But to the avoiding of worldliness no help is more efficacious than having a right and fixed view of the world. There are two views of the world which Christians may take, two views which are actually taken by those who are trying to serve God and to love Him purely. Some take a very gloomy view of the world. To them it seems altogether bad, wholly evil, irretrievably lost. Every thing is danger; for there is sin everywhere. All its roses have thorns under the leaves. There is a curse upon every thing belonging to it. Its joys are only other forms of melancholy. Its sunshine is a mockery; its beautiful scenery a deceit; the soothingness of domestic affections a snare. Its life is an incessant death. We have no right to smile at any thing. The world is so dark that it is even a perpetual partial eclipse of God. If the present is miserable, let us delay upon it; for in misery we shall find food for our souls. If it is joyous, let us rush from it into the forebodings of a future when all the world and the fashion of it will be burned up with fire. A funeral on a wet day in a disconsolate churchyard, this is the type of the minds who take this view.

The other view is the very opposite of all this. It is the bright view. Those who take it see all creation lying before them with the lustre of God's benediction on it. It is the earth on which Jesus was born. The innocent attachments of earthly love are to such men helps to love God better. Natural beauty supernaturalizes their minds. The sunshine makes them better men. God's perfections are seen everywhere written in hieroglyphics over the world. Kindness is so abun-

dant, nobility of heart so plentiful, the joys of home so pure, yet so attractive, the successes of the Gospel so infinitely consoling, all things in fact, so much better on trial than they seemed, that the world appears a happy place, and missing but a little,—so little it is sad to think how little, of being a holy place also, holy from the very abundance of its pure happiness. At every turn, there are radiant fountains of joy leaping up, to meet us. Even adverse things are wonderfully tempered in the present, while in the past they have such a pathetic golden light upon them, that the memory of them is one of our best treasures, and we would not for worlds not have suffered them; and as to any evil in the future, there is such an inextinguishable light of joy within us that we simply disbelieve it. The clouds fly before us as we go. Music sounds around our path. And as to cares, they find themselves so little at home with us, that, when we come to the night,

“They fold up their tents like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away.”

St. Bernard may be called the prophet of the first view, St. Francis of Sales of the Second. The first seems more safe for human presumption, the second more cheering to discouragement. One leads through holy fear to love; the other through holy love to fear. The one disenchants more from the world; the other enchants more with God. The one subdues; the other gives elasticity. The one seems more admonitory to man; the other more honorable to God. Both can make saints; but saints of different kinds. Both are true; yet both are untrue. They are partial views; and one is more true to each

person than the other, because it is more suitable to his character and temper to dwell upon what is prominently dark, or prominently bright as the case may be. The strange thing is, that no one seems to be able to take in impartially the whole view of the world, the true view, the bright and the dark together. Intellectually they may do so; but practically they must lean either to the dark or bright, exaggerate their own view, and do the other view injustice. No mind leaves things uncolored. The grand thing is to turn it all to God and to begin straightway to manufacture heavenly love both out of our darkness and our light.

But to conclude, there are certain things which it is important to note with regard to worldliness, and which can not be too often repeated. The first is that even spiritual persons for the most part greatly underestimate its danger. Nothing more is needed. When you have underestimated its danger, you are already its victim.

In the second place, as men are very apt not to know worldliness when they see it, and as it is not an easy matter always to be paying attention to the atmosphere we breathe, it is of great importance to have well-ascertained principles. An inconsistent great man is an impotent creature in practical matters, while a consistently moderate man does the work of a great one. Above all, a man should have ascertained principles of practical religion, if religion is to be the business of his life.

In the third place, if ascertained principles are of such importance to us in this respect, and if the power of our faith depends materially either on its

simplicity or its intelligence, and if our faith is "the victory which overcometh the world," it is of great consequence that we should know and study our religion well. It is proverbial that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing; but this is less true of theology than it is of any other science, because the least acquaintance with it deepens our view of our own ignorance, and it breathes such an odor of God, that intellectual bashfulness would seem to be its special gift, increasing as our studies penetrate nearer and nearer to those divine abysses, into which knowledge may not descend until it has been metamorphosed into love. A man who has finished his education in these days without having acquired a profound intellectual respect for his religion, is the most likely of all men to become the prey of an unbelieving and ungodly world, and to betray his Lord without intending it, and then to grow angry, and turn away in proud dislike from Him whom he has thus betrayed.

In the last place it is honestly to be confessed that all these things do but form an armor against the spirit of the world. They are not a victory over it. Moreover it is an armor which is by no means invulnerable. All these helps which have been suggested are not infallible; nay, they are but auxiliaries for a season; and for all their worth, the world may, and most likely will, take us captive in the end. There is no redemption for the creature but in the service of the Creator. There is no power to counteract the manifold spirit of evil but one, and that is the desire of God, the craving to see His face, the yearning for His beauty. There is no specific against worldliness but God.

CHAPTER VIII.

OUR OWN GOD.

The Creator is the creature's home. Neither spirit of angel nor soul of man can rest short of God. All things teach us this beautiful truth. All things that find us wandering lead us home again, to the bosom of our Eternal Father. The three distinct orders of nature, grace, and glory, if the last two may indeed be called distinct, all in their own respective ways, at once teach us this comforting and saving truth, and teach us also to practice what they teach. The natural joy of beautiful scenery, the strong grace of Christian holiness, and the thrill of glory which passes through our souls from the unveiled face of God, all, in degrees almost infinitely apart, draw us home to God, or keep us there. God is our Last End as well as our First Cause. O that the day were come when we shall be securely at His Feet forever!

When we speak of God's glory we may mean one or more of four things. First of all, His glory may be either intrinsic or external; and then each of those may be of two kinds also. God's own excellence, His own beauty, the infinity of His perfections in Himself, is as it were, the objective glory of God, which is intrinsic to Himself; whereas His own knowledge of

Himself, His own love of Himself, and His own joy in Himself, which are also intrinsic, are what theology terms His formal glory. The beauty of creation, the perfection of creatures, their loveliness, their number, their adaptations, even their color and form, are the external glory of God, represented objectively, whereas the knowledge of Him, the love of Him, and the joy in Him, which His rational creatures have, is His formal external glory. Now we say that God is necessitated to do every thing for His own glory, and that though the Creator of the world was perfectly free, yet, granting it was to be created by God, it must of necessity be created for His glory. That God has created the world is a fact. It is contradictory not to His wisdom only, but to every one of His perfections, that He should have created it without an object at all. It is impossible to Him, as God, to have any other end but Himself. It is contrary to the plenitude of His self-sufficiency that He should have created it in order to gain from it conveniences which He has not now, or joys which He does not already possess; for these are intrinsic to Himself. But it is possible for Him to have a glory extrinsic to Himself, over and above that which is intrinsic. On the other hand, it is impossible for Him to have any thing else extrinsic to Himself, which creation could give Him, except glory. Even then the glory is not necessary to Him, and does not make Him more blessed, or more self-sufficient than He was; at best it is only congruous to His Divine Majesty to have it. Thus it is that God is necessitated to do all things for His own glory. He is limited to this by the very plenitude of His perfections. As nothing exists in

the world without the influx of His omnipresence supporting it and keeping it above the abyss of nothingness, into which of itself it is falling back evermore, so also nothing exists in the world, which is not involved in, and depending upon, God's glory. Even the permissions of sin glorify Him, for without them the wills of His creatures would not be free.

The inanimate and irrational creations glorify God, by the very splendor of the beauty in which He has clothed them. They glorify Him by their adaptation and subservience to man. Their abundance in their kinds, and their many kinds which are over and above what are necessary to man, is another glory of their Creator, by being in some sort a picture of His copious magnificence. They glorify Him, also, by bearing on themselves the seal and signet of His divinity, and even of His Trinity in Unity, and their degree of goodness depends on the degree in which they adumbrate the divine perfections. But much more does the rational creature glorify its Creator. By its very existence it represents God as the inanimate and irrational creations do. But by its intelligence it knows God, and with its knowledge loves Him, and by its will it loves Him, and with its love enjoys Him. Thus, the knowledge, love, and joy, of the rational creatures, the three things by which they chiefly shadow forth the Holy Trinity, praise and admire and worship the Divine Nature, all which is the rendering glory to Him. By these three things, they as it were enter into God and rest in Him, through the gifts of grace and glory.

Thus does creation come home, like a weary bird to its roost, to rest in its Creator. And then all move-

ments cease, all vicissitudes, changes, progresses, aspirations, discoveries, and all is rest within, without, around, the kingdom of eternal peace. Then the Son gives up the kingdom to His Father as the apostle speaks; and the subjection of His Human Nature, which had been, as it were, veiled in the government of the Church and in the pomp of judgment, becomes more apparent; and then, as if this last act of unspeakable subjection on the part of that Created Nature, which is the Head and Firstborn of all creatures, were the crowning beauty of creation, God the Creator, becomes all in all, and the chronicles of this creation close. Beyond that all is lost in the indistinguishable radiance of eternity. Such is the history of creation, as theology ventures to conceive it, lying in the divine mind. It is a work of simple love, of gigantic dimensions, with the most beautiful proportion in all its parts, and the most exquisite finish in every detail. Love is the life of it from first to last; and its result is an abiding, immortal, created, counterpart of the eternal, uncreated, and undivided Trinity.

If we have taken the pains to master this somewhat difficult account of creation, we shall see that it is, as it were, the frame within which all the relations of the Creator and the creature are enclosed. But what is the conclusion to which it all leads? That religion must necessarily be a service of love; and that the only security from worldliness is also in a personal love of God. It is neither the wonderful character of its doctrines, nor the pure simplicity of its precepts, nor the supernatural power of its assistances, which make religion what it is, but the fact of its being the creature's personal love of the Creator.

No one denies this doctrine of the necessity of personal love of God. But there are two different schools of spirituality which treat it very differently; indeed whose difference consists in their different treatment of it. All are agreed that as the proof of love is the keeping of the commandments, so the sense of duty, the brave determination to do always and only what is right, must go along with, and be a part of, personal love of God. Personal love of God without this would be a falsehood and a mockery. They who dwell most strongly on the sense of duty do not omit personal love of God; and they who lay the greatest stress on love both imply and secure the keen sense of rightfulness and duty. But much depends on which of the two we put foremost. It is possible by dwelling exclusively on love to make religion too much a matter of mere devotions, an affair of sentiments and feelings, highly strung and therefore brittle, overstrained, and so short-lived. It is possible, on the other hand, that by laying all the stress on duty, especially with young persons, or again with sinners, the true motive of duty may not have fair play, and the peculiar character of the Gospel be overlooked, or inadequately remembered. We must pursue such and such a line of conduct because it is commanded, because it is right, because it will win us respect, because it will enable us to form habits of virtue, because it will edify, because we can not otherwise go to communion, because we shall be lost eternally if we do not pursue it. This is quite intelligible, and it is all very true, but not particularly persuasive, especially to those whom youth makes ardent, or those whom sin has made invalids. We must pursue such and such a line

of conduct because it is the one which God loves, and God loves us most tenderly, and has loved us from all eternity, and God yearns that we should love Him, and He catches at our love as if it were a prize, and repays it with a fondness which is beyond human comprehension, and it grieves His love, and He makes it a personal matter if we swerve from such conduct, and if we only love all will be easy. This is also intelligible, and very true, and also very persuasive, and has a wonderful root of perseverance in it. But it comes to pass that while both views are very true, they nevertheless form quite different characters. So that it is one of the most important practical questions of our lives to settle, whether we will love God because it is right, or whether we will do right because God loves us, and we love Him.

If all the evil that is in the world arises from the want of a practical acknowledgment of the true relations between the Creator and the creature, it is equally true that from the same want comes all that is deficient in our spiritual lives ; and furthermore the true relations between the Creator and the creature are more readily appreciated, more lovingly embraced, and more perseveringly acted out, on the system which puts love first and duty second, which does right because God loves us, rather than loves God because it is right. Religion no doubt comes to persons in different ways. Men begin in various places in religion. There is not exactly any one normal beginning of being pious. We should never think therefore of condemning, or throwing the slightest slur, on any method which succeeded in securing the continuous keeping of God's commandments upon supernatural

motives. This must be borne in mind, together with the full admission both of the safety and the soundness of the other principle, while we state the reasons for preferring that school of spirituality, which puts forward most prominently the personal love of God, and dwells upon it to all persons and at every turn. It seems of the two the most likely to advance the Creator's glory, first by saving a greater number of souls, and secondly by swelling the ranks of those who generously aim at perfection.

Love sharpens our eyes, and quickens all the senses of our souls. Now when we dwell very exclusively on the sense of duty, and urge people to learn to do right, just because it is right, we seem often to be wanting in the delicacy and fineness of our spiritual discernment. We are not always on God's side, because we do not instinctively apprehend on which side He is. We do not prophetically see the evil, which is as yet invisible and implicit in some line of action. Our spiritual tastes are blunt, sometimes inclining to be gross. We do not at once detect worldliness in its first insidious aggressions. Love has a specialty for all these things, and conscientiousness often runs aground in shallow places, where love sails through, finding deep water, with an almost supernatural skill. The duty principle, if it is allowable so to name it for convenience' sake, is more apt to grow weary than love. Love is a stimulant. It has a patent for making things easy. It invigorates us, and enables us to do hard things with a sensible sweetness, and a religious pleasure, where mere conscientiousness would fail through the infirmity of its own nature. Thus perseverance is more congruous

to the conduct which proceeds on the principle of love, than to that which looks prominently to duty. Moreover where there is effort there is seldom abundance, while it is the characteristic of love to be prolific.

This must not be misunderstood. The principle of duty is holy and strong. The principle of love disjoined from the principle of duty is a thing which will save no man. All that we have been arguing for is, that the spiritual man who looks at love primarily and prominently, and at duty secondarily and subordinately, will sooner be a thoroughly converted man, or a saint, or a higher kind of a saint, than the spiritual man who reverses the process, and looks at duty primarily and prominently as the solid part of his devotion, and love secondarily and subordinately as the sweetening of his duty.

Personal love of God! This then is the conclusion of the whole. To love God because He desires our love, to love Him because He first loved us, to love Him because He loves us with such a surpassing love, to love our Creator because He redeemed us, and our Redeemer because He created us, to love Him as our Creator in all the orders of nature, grace, and glory, and finally to love Him for His own sake because of His infinite perfections, because He is what He is,—this, and this alone, is religion; this is what flows from the ties between the Creator and His redeemed creature; for what is redemption but the restoring, repairing, and ennobling of creation? To love our Creator as our First Cause, as our Last End, and as our Abiding Possession—this is the whole matter.

We are God's own creatures, and God is our own

God. All else will fail us, but He never will. All is love with Him, love in light, and love in darkness, love always and everywhere. There are many difficulties left unexplained, many problems yet unsolved. Would it not be strange if it were not so, seeing that He is infinite and we finite? But the difficulties are only difficulties of love. There is no difficulty in wondering why we are not in heaven already. The wonder and difficulty are that such as we know ourselves to be should ever enter there at all. Yet when that difficulty looks up into the face of God's Fidelity, then that most soothing of all our Creator's grandeurs wipes the tears from its eyes, and hope comes out from behind her cloud, and shines softly, and the heart is still. O my Creator, my Eternal Love! O my Father, my heavenly Father! Weary, but full of trust, worthless, but truly loving Thee, on earth still, and very far from heaven, my home and my rest are still in Thy Fidelity! *In Te Domine! speravi, non confundar in æternum!*

PART II.

THE INCARNATION

CHAPTER I.

THE BOSOM OF THE ETERNAL FATHER.

What a revelation of beauty is the mystery of the Incarnation ! The highest angelical intelligence could not have conceived it without a revelation from God, and Scripture pictures the angels to us as ever bending over and looking into this mystery, to feed their love, their wisdom and their adoration out of the depths of its glory and sweetness. The Scotist school of theologians teach that the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity would have been incarnate even if Adam had never sinned, and that the Incarnation was already involved in the very fact of Creation. For if God created creatures in order to raise them toward Himself, He would unite Himself to them in the closest possible way ; and that way it now appears is by the Hypostatic union, the assumption of a created nature to an uncreated Person. On this hypothesis Jesus would have taken a glorious and impassible Humanity and His “delights would have been among the children of men.” Sin and the fall gave to the Incarnation its remedial character, with the passible humanity, the mysteries of the thirty-three

years, and all the pathetic circumstances of our redemption. The Thomist School of theologians hold, though not unanimously, that if Adam had not sinned, our Lord would not have been incarnate, and that His coming was simply remedial, an outpouring of God's mercy to hinder the utter desolation which Adam's fall must otherwise inevitably cause.

Without venturing to decide at present between these two great schools of theology, I may say that there are many things to recommend the Scotist opinion. So far as the forgiveness of sin is concerned, God *could* have absolved us from it short of the Incarnation, and even the mercifulness of the remedial character of that mystery is if any thing more forcibly and touchingly brought forward in the Scotist view ; as if sin so far from hindering this great mercy, only gave fresh pathos, and new tenderness to a gift we might have expected it would have frustrated altogether.

But whether we look at the Incarnation as a double mystery with the Scotists, or as a single mystery with the Thomists, what a boundless field of holy contemplation does it not open to us ! The incomparable wisdom of the inventions of God's mercy ; the way in which creation is taken up to the Creator ; the depth to which He penetrated to gather up to His majesty the farthest outlying reasonable nature ; the manner in which He accomplished it by the union of two natures in one Person ; the unutterable wonders of a weak, tired, insulted, suffering, dying God—well may the angels desire to look into these things ; and if it were not that the will of God is their will, they would envy us their younger brethren, because our dear

nature, not their lofty and resplendent one, has been set down forever at the Right Hand of the Majesty on High.

When the lark mounts up to heaven to sing its morning hymn, the sounds of labor and the cries of earth, the lowing of the cattle, the rushing of the waters, and the rustling of the leaves grow fainter and fainter as the bird rises in the air. The wind waves the branches of the trees, but to the bird they wave noiselessly. The morning breeze bends the silvery side of the uncut grass, where its nest lies hid, till the whole field rises and falls in green and white waves like the shallows of the sea; but it is all a silent show. No sound reaches the secluded bird in that region of still sunshine where he is pouring out those glorious hymns, of which we catch only either the prelude as he soars, or the last precipitate fragments as he falls to earth from out his shrine of light. So is it with us in prayer, when we rise above our own wants or the outcries of our temptations, and soar in self-forgetting adoration toward the throne of God hidden in light inaccessible. The sounds of earth go first of all. Then the waving soundless show seems fixed, and still, and motionless, and diminished. Next it melts into a confused, faint-colored vision, and soon it lies below in a blue mist, like land uncertainly descried at sea. Then, last of all, the very attraction of earth seems gone, and our soul shoots upward, as if like fire its centre was above, and not below. Thus must it be with us now, for we have to rise to the Bosom of the Eternal Father.

St. Joseph is kneeling by the Child in the Cave of Bethlehem. Let us draw near, and kneel there with

him and follow his thoughts afar off. It is but an hour since that Babe was born into the world, and gladdened Mary's eyes with the divine consolations of His face. It is but nine months since he was incarnate in the inner room at Nazareth. Yet neither Nazareth nor Bethlehem were His beginnings. He was eternal years old the moment He was born. Time which had already lived through such long cycles, and had perhaps endured through huge secular epochs before the creation of man, was younger by infinite ages than the Babe of Bethlehem. The creation of the angels with the beauty and exultation of their first graces, the orderly worship of their hierarchies, their mysterious trial, the dreadful fall of one third of their number, and Michael's battle with the rebels, lie dim and remote beyond the furthest mists of human history. Yet the Babe of Bethlehem is older far than that. Indeed it was around Him that all angelic history was grouped. Hereafter He will spend a three years' ministry in Galilee, and among the towns of Judah and Benjamin, yet, in truth all the history of man's world, from the times of paradise, had been His ministry. He preached before the flood. He gave His benediction to the tents of the patriarchs. He imparted grace, and saved souls, and wrought miracles in Jewry and in heathendom for some thousands of years. But now, by the sand-glasses of men, He is one hour old.

Bethlehem then was not His first home. The dark cave within, and the moonlit slope without, are not like the scenery of His everlasting home. He is the Eternal Word. He is the first Word ever spoken, and He was spoken by God, and He is in all things equal

to Him by whom He was spoken. He was uttered from Eternity, and the Father who uttered Him, or rather who is forever uttering Him, is not prior to the word He utters. His home has no scenery, no walls, no shape, no form, no color, no spot which can be loved with a local love. It is in the Bosom of the Father. It is amid the unlocalized fires of the Godhead. There in the white light, inaccessible through the brilliance of its whiteness, we confusedly discern the magnificence of a Divine Person. He is unbegotten. He is not a word whom any one could utter, for there is no one to utter Him, and He is beside adorably unutterable. He is not a Breath breathed forth of divine love; for there were none whose mutual love could breathe Him forth, and He is beside adorably unproceeding. The Word expresses Him, not because He utters Him, but because He is uttered by Him. The Holy Spirit is His fiery Breath, the Breath of the Father and the Son, coequal with them both, but with no procession from His blessed self. This Divine Person whom we confusedly discern, is like a Fountain, a fountain of golden light flowing with uncreated waters. Yet the Fountain is not a fountain without its waters, and the waters are coeval with the Fountain. Out of Him flows the Son; from Him and from His Word proceeds the Holy Ghost, all coequal, coeternal, consubstantial. Yet He is the First Person, and gloriously without superiority or precedence. He is the sole Fountain of Godhead, yet it is the very glory of the Fountain that its double streams are coequal with itself. He in His adorable sublimity is the unsent inseparable Companion of the Two Divine Persons who are sent, and who send themselves. Him, without im-

ages, we discern in the breathlessness of our far-seeing faith. Him, without light, we behold in the darkness of His blinding majesty. Him, in His outstretched immensity we compass in the fondness of our adoring love. Him, in His nameless incomprehensibility, we sweetly understand in the knowledge that we are His sons. His Bosom, an abyss of unfathomable beauty, the shrine of unruffled peace, the furnace of the divine beatitude, is the home of the Babe of Bethlehem, His only native place.

What manner of life was it which the Word led in the Bosom of the Father? It was a creatureless life. There were no creatures except in the purposes and decrees of the divine mind, and in the inexhaustible store-houses of the divine wisdom. It was a life of infinite complacency. God rested in Himself. In Himself His infinity was satisfied. The immensity of His own perfections lay before Him, and He traversed them so to speak, with His blessed understanding. The imperfection of our human words is such, that we can not speak of God without seeming to divide Him. We must therefore bear the adorable simplicity of God in mind, while we thus discourse of the abysses of His divine life. It can not be too often repeated that God has not many several attributes nor even one; but He is simply God. He is not different from His perfections, nor are His perfections, strictly speaking, different from each other. He is Himself infinite perfection in manifold simplicity. Here we must worship, for we must cease to reason or to portray. The thought of God must fill our minds. There is more light in the indistinctness of that thought than in the clearest demonstrations of human science.

The life in the Bosom of the Father was also a life of love, but of such love as passes our limited comprehension. Even created love is a very world of delights, and in one or other of its many departments it is the sunshine of life. It can bear the pressure of time, and not give way. It can outlive wrong. It is mightier than death. It can change darkness to light. But, if love has all these prerogatives among men, where it is so debased by its alliance with matter, how grand must be its empire among the pure and intellectual angels! With what spotless fires must it not burn in their magnificent intelligences! We can hardly picture to ourselves angelic love, except as something fabulously bright, and inexpressibly wonderful. Yet all this is nothing to the love in the life of God. It is an emanation from it, but infinitely diluted, a shadow of it, yet not only faint and faithless, but fragmentary and partial also.

What was the first aspect of creation in the divine mind, if we may use the word "first" of that which was eternal? There may be at least a priority of order, even though there be no priority of time. There is precedence in decrees, even where there is not succession. The first aspect of creation, as it lay in the mind of God, was a created nature assumed to His own uncreated nature in a divine Person. Through this, as it were, lay the passage from the Creator to creatures. This was the point of union, the junction between the finite and the Infinite, the creature blending unconfusedly with the Creator. This first-born creature, this Sacred Humanity, was the primal creature. All others group themselves around it, and are in relations with it, and draw their sig-

nificance from it, and moreover are modelled upon it. The whole meaning of creation, equally with the destinies of each individual creature is bound up with this created Nature assumed to a Divine Person. It is the head of creations, angelic, human, or whatsoever other creation there may be. Its position is universal, for it couples all creations on to God.

But by which of the Three Divine Persons was this created nature to be assumed? By the Second Person, the Word who had been living everlastingly in the Bosom of the Father, the life we have been attempting to describe. There is a special connection between the Word and creatures, independent of the fact of His having assumed a created nature, and which seems to be part of the reason why He—not the other Two Persons—should have been the One to assume it. As the Word, He is the utterance of the Father, the expression of Him, the image of Him. Creation is in a finite and created way what He is infinitely, and uncreatedly. Creation is a divine word, an utterance, an expression, an image of God, faint, feeble, far-off, external, mutable, free, while the Word is the image of God within God, consubstantial, eternal, immutable, and necessary. We venture to think it most probable that all creatures have some distinct relations to the different Persons of the Holy Trinity, and that the Trinity of God, as well as His Unity, is impressed on His creation. Nevertheless, quite apart from this idea, there is a special connection between the Son and creatures, as between the inward and the outward Word of God. So that His assumption of a created nature was the congruous way in which creation expressed itself. It was the inward Word be-

coming outward. It was the eternal generation followed by the temporal generation. Thus there is a congruity in the Son's assumption of a created nature which there would not have been, at least in our indistinct vision of divine things, in a similar assumption by the Father or the Holy Ghost.

But there is a second congruity which may be evolved out of the first. He is not the Word only, He is the Son also. In His relation as Son we discern another fitness for His assumption of a created nature. He is the Son of God by nature, and rational creatures were to be the sons of God by adoption through their justification. It was the end of their creation that they were to be admitted to share in His filiation. The communication of His sonship was to be their way into glory. As God appeared as if He entered into creation through the person of the Son, so through the same Person does creation find its way to rest in God. Hence it was fitting that the Second Person should be the One to assume a created nature, in order that He might not only be the Son of God in His divine nature, but also the Son of God in His created nature. This second sonship He obtained through His created nature through which also He comes to be the Head of all God's adopted sons, the sonship of His created nature being the model and the cause and the means of their adoption; though its own sonship is natural and not adopted. This is a congruity founded on His being the Son as well as the Word.

All this has no concern with the prevision of sin, and the fall of man. Indeed, it would be equally consistent with the assumption of an angelic nature

by the Person assuming. For we have spoken hitherto of the assumption of a created nature by one of the Three Divine Persons in connection with the mystery of creation generally. But if, for the moment, we take for granted His choice of a human nature, and add to it the further consideration of the fall, we come in sight of a fresh congruity in the assumption of the created nature by the Second Person rather than the First or Third. Adam fell in the lawless search after science. His sin was a traitorous attempt to force the divine wisdom to give up the secrets which it chose to conceal. He leagued with the mighty fallen intelligence of God's enemy in order to learn what God had forbidden him to know. Now the Word is the substantial wisdom of the Father. It is by the Father's knowledge of Himself that the Word is produced. So when in the prevision of sin the Incarnation took its remedial form, it was most suitable that He who is the substantial wisdom of the Father, should be the Person to assume that nature, which now needed redeeming because it had fallen, and fallen in the unlawful and disobedient pursuit of divine knowledge.

But although it was the Person of the Son, and not the Person of the Father or the Holy Spirit, which assumed a created nature, we must bear in mind that that assumption was the work of the whole Trinity. It was not more the work of the Person assuming, than it was of the Two Persons not assuming. Every work which God does outside Himself is the work of all the Three Persons equally, even when there is something special in the mission and operation of the different Persons. The Holy Trinity acts as one God,

even when creatures may come into special relations with One of the Divine Persons. Nevertheless we may have special feelings, not feelings of comparison, or of preference, or of distinction, yet special feelings toward the One Person who was actually incarnate; and we may base our devotions on such feelings, without any fear of deflecting from the analogy of the faith. Piety must of necessity have its special feelings toward Each of the Three Divine Persons, which feelings flow from their personal distinctions; and in the same way their missions to creatures, and the absence of all mission in the Father, are the ground for similar, and still more special feelings. Still more shall we feel this when we remember what has been already said, that the Second Person was incarnate precisely because He was the Second Person. This is difficult doctrine. But we must bear with a few difficulties at first. They will make what follows easier, and they will illuminate many beauties which except by their light we should either never see, or see only as a confused and dazzling indistinctness.

Thus the predestined created nature of the Word lay everlastingly in the vast Bosom of the Father. It was a human nature eternally chosen with a distinct and significant predilection. It was the first creature. It is He who in His assumed nature we call Jesus. All angels, men, animals, and matter, were made because of Him and for Him simply. He is the sole reason of the existence of every created thing, the sole interpretation of them all, the sole rule and measure of every external work of God. It is in the light of this predestination of Jesus that we must regard all life, all science, all history, all the grandeurs

of angels, all the destinies of men, all the beautiful geography of this variegated planet-garden, all the problematical possibilities of world-crowded space. Our own little tiny life, our own petty orbit, like the walk of an insect on a leaf, lies in the soft radiance of the predestination of Jesus, as in a beautifying sunset, and has a sweet meaning there, and is well-nigh infinitely dear to God, who clothes it with an importance to Himself which it is the hardest of all mysteries to understand, because it is the most incredible of loves.

CHAPTER II.

THE MIDNIGHT CAVE.

There have been many wonderful pictures on this earth. But earth has seldom witnessed such a scene as Mary, and Joseph, and the Eternal Word in the streets of Bethlehem at nightfall. The cold early evening of winter was closing in. Mary and Joseph had striven in vain to get a lodging. To all but its Creator the world makes no difficulty of at least a two-fold hospitality,—to be born and to die, to come into the world and to go out of it. Yet how did it treat Him in both these respects? He was driven among the animals and beasts of burden to be born. That little village of the least of the tribes said truly, it had no room for the Immense and the Incomprehensible. Bethlehem could not indeed hold her who held within herself the Creator of the world. There was an unconscious truth even in its inhospitality. Alas! the spirit of Bethlehem is but the spirit of a world which has forgotten God. How often has it been our own spirit also! How are we through churlish ignorance forever shutting out from our doors heavenly blessings! Thus it is that we mismanage all our sorrows, not recognizing their heavenly character, although it is blazoned after their own peculiar

fashion upon their brows. God is always taking us by surprise when we have no business to be surprised at all. Bethlehem did not in the least mean what it was doing. No one means half the evil which he does. Hence it is a grand part of God's compassion to look more at what we mean than at what we do. Yet it is a sad loss for ourselves to be so blind. Is it not after all the real misery of life, the compendium of all its miseries, that we are meeting God every day, and do not know Him when we see Him?

The twilight deepens. Mary and Joseph descend the hill. They find the Cave, a Stable Cave, a sort of grotto with an erection before it, so common in those lands, by which depth and coolness are both attained. The Arab builds by preference in front of a cave because half his dwelling is thus built for him from the first. The cavern seems to draw them like a spell. Souls are strangely drawn, and to strangest things and places, when once they are within the vortex of a divine vocation. There are the lights and songs and music of the crowded village above them, turning into festival the civil obligation which has brought such unwonted numbers thither. Beneath that gay street a poor couple from Nazareth have sought refuge with the ox and ass in the stable. What is about to happen there? It must be differently described according to the points of view from which we consider it. Angels would say that some of God's eternal decrees were on the eve of being accomplished in the most beautiful and divine of ways, and that the invisible King was about to come forth and take visible possession of a kingdom not narrower than the universe, with such pomp as the spiritual and Godlike

angels most affect. The magistrate in Bethlehem would say that, at the time of the census, a pauper child had been added to the population by a houseless couple who had come from Nazareth, noting perhaps, that the couple were of good family but fallen into poverty. This would be the way in which the world would register the advent of its Maker. It is a consistent world,—only an unteachable one. It has learned nothing by experience. It registers Him in the same manner this very day.

If places are consecrated in the eyes of whole generations by having been the birthplaces of great men, or the spots where they produced immortal works of genius, what shall we say of the spot where the Incarnate God was born? Surely it must be a place of pilgrimage to the end of time. They who can not visit it in the body must make their pilgrimage to it in spirit. It is not merely devout curiosity which we shall thus gratify, or even fresh fuel for the fires of meditation, which we shall lay up; but according to our usual way of regarding things, we shall learn much about God, his character and his way, by our study of the Cave of Bethlehem. When we enter it, and attentively consider its furniture, it seems to set before us the whole mystery of the Incarnation. Five material objects stand round about, and as it were over the shoulder of each of them, we discern an ethereal form looking on, a spiritual presence assisting them, of which these five material things are as it were the representatives and symbols. First of all there are the Beasts,—the ox and the ass. There is surely something inexpressibly touching in this presence of the inferior animals at the nativity of the In-

carneate Creator. In the Incarnation God has been pleased to go to what look like the uttermost limits of His divine condescension. He has assumed a material though rational nature; and, according to our understanding, it would not have been seemly that He should have assumed an irrational nature. Nevertheless, He is not unmindful of the inferior creatures. Their instincts are in some sort a communion with Him, often apparently of a more direct character than reason itself, and bordering on what would commonly be called the supernatural. At times there is something startling in this seeming proximity of the animal kingdom to God. Moreover all the inferior animals, with their families, shapes, colors, cries, manners, and peculiarities represent ideas in the divine mind, and are partial disclosures of the beauty of God, like the foliage of trees, the gleaming of metals, the play of light in the clouds, the multifarious odors of wood and field, and the manifold sound of waters. It was then, if we may use such an expression, a propriety of divine art that the inferior creatures should be represented in the picture of their Maker's temporal nativity. They remind us that the Babe of Bethlehem was the Creator. Their presence is another of His condescensions. He is not only rejected of men, but he trespasses, so to speak, on the hospitality of beasts. He shares their home, and they are well content. They welcome him with unobtrusive submission, and do what little they can to temper with their warm breath the rigor of the winter night. If they make no show of reception, at least they deny Him not the room He asks on His own earth. They make way for Him; and there was more wor-

ship even in that than Bethlehem would give Him. We reckon such things as these among the humiliations of our Blessed Lord, and rightly.

Every circumstance, every detail, every seeming accident of the Incarnation, is full of humiliation. It follows by a necessary consequence from every mystery. Even the praise of men is a deep humiliation to the Most High in His Incarnate form, when we consider who they were that passed the favorable judgment upon His actions, and with what mind, as if they had a right to judge and patronize, they passed it, and also who He was whom they were praising. All praise of God, unless it be worship also, is humiliating to Him. Thus every thing about the Incarnation was humiliating. Our Lord's Divinity, as it were, holds a strong light over all His human actions and sufferings, and shows each of them to us in its real character as an unfathomable depth of condescension, no matter whether the mysteries be those of glory or suffering.

Our Lord's companionship with the inferior animals was one of these glorious humiliations, which have become honorable mysteries. But He was not only their companion. He was laid in their Manger as if He were their food, the food of beasts, that so He might become in very truth the food of sinners. This Manger was the second of the material objects which were round about Him. While it was a deep shame, it was also a sweet prophecy. It foretold the wonders of His altar. It was a symbol of the incredible abundance and commonness of His grace.

The rough Straw is the quilting of His crib; and the refuse of an Oriental threshing floor is not like

the carefully-husbanded straw of our own land. Men made Him as a worm and no man in the onslaughts of His Passion. He Himself in His first infancy makes His bed as though He were a beast of burden, a beast tamed and domesticated for the use of men. The vilest things in creation are good enough for the Creator. He even exhibits a predilection for them. The refuse of man—that is the portion of God. It is not only that we give it Him; He chooses it, and His choice teaches us strange things, and stamps its peculiar character on Christian sanctity. Such is the furniture of the nursery of the King of kings. The light of Joseph's lantern shoots here and there redly and imperfectly through the darkness, and we see the faces of the dumb Beasts, with the pathetic meekness in their eyes, and the rough Manger worn smooth and black and glistening, and the Straw scattered here and there and bruised beneath the feet of the animals, and so perchance rendered less sharp and prickly as a couch for the new-born Babe. We must add to these features that very darkness which the lantern so indistinctly illumines. The darkness of earth's night is the very chosen, the favored time of the Uncreated Splendor of heaven. It is the curtain of His concealment, the veil of His tabernacle, the screen of His sanctuary. At dead of night He is coming now at Bethlehem. At dead of night also will He come—if we rightly penetrate His words—to judge the world. There is no darkness with Him, and He needs no light to work by, who called the sun itself from nothing, and hung it over with white mantle of blinding light. He came to darkness. It was His very mission. He came when the darkness

was deepest, as His grace comes so often now. The very depth of our darkness is a kind of compulsion to the immensity of His compassion. This Darkness is the fourth material thing which is round about them. Lastly, we must note as another feature of the Cave its Cold. The very elements shall inflict suffering upon their Creator as soon as He is born in His created form. But what is the whole world but a polar sea, a wilderness of savage ice with the arctic sunshine glinting off from it in unfertile brightness, a restless glacier creeping onward with its huge talons, but whose progress is little better than spiritual desolation? The Sacred Heart of the Babe of Bethlehem has come to be the vast central fire of the frozen world. It is to break the bands of the long frost, to loosen the bosom of the earth, and to cover it with fruits and flowers. As He came to what was dark, so He came to what was cold; and therefore Cold and Darkness were among the first to welcome Him.

The Beasts, the Manger, the Straw, the Darkness, and the Cold! These things are spiritual types, as well as material realities. Matter has many times masked angels. There were five spiritual presences in the Cave of Bethlehem, which these five material things most aptly represented. They were Poverty, Abandonment, Rejection, Secrecy, and Mortification. They started with the Infant Jesus from the Cave, and they went with Him to the Tomb. They are stern powers, and their visages unlovely, and their voices harsh, and their company unwelcome to the natural man. But to the eye which grace has cleansed they are beautiful exceedingly, and their solemnity inviting, and their spells like those of earthly love, making

the heart to burn, and full often guiding life into a romance of sanctity. The companionship of the Beasts, and the room they had, as it were, lent Him to be born in, betokened His exceeding poverty. The Manger was the type of His Abandonment. Could any figure have been more complete? The refuse Straw on which He lay, and which perhaps Joseph gathered from under the feet of the cattle, well expressed that Rejection wherewith men have visited and will visit Him and His Church through all generations till the end. The Darkness round Him was a symbol of those strange and manifold Secrecies in which He loves to shroud Himself, like the eclipse on Calvary. The wintry Cold which caused His delicate frame to shudder and feel its first pain was the fitting commencement of that continuous Mortification which the All-Holy and Innocent underwent for the redemption of the guilty. These five things stood like spiritual presences around His crib, waiting for His coming,—Poverty, Abandonment, Rejection, Secrecy, and Mortification. Alas! we must be changed indeed before such attendance shall be choice of ours! Yet have they not been evermore the five sisters of all the saints of God?

There was something, therefore, in these five things, which expressed the character of the Incarnate Word. They portrayed His human sanctity. They were a prophecy of the Three-and-Thirty years. Yet these five things not only contain the peculiar spirit of the Incarnation and embody its heavenly characteristics, they also express the character of God Himself, and throw light upon the hidden things of His divine majesty. Is not created poverty the true dig-

nity of Him whose wealth is uncreated? Shall He, whose life has been eternal independence and self-sufficing beatitude, lean upon creatures? Can the very thought of comfort come nigh to the Omnipotent and not dishonor Him? Silver and gold, diamonds and pearls, houses and lands, all these things surely would have seemed more truly ignominious to God, than the reproaches of Sion, or the cruelties of Calvary. It was enough that He let our nature lean upon His Person.

Even the abandonment of Bethlehem was worthy of His self-sufficing loneliness. Men fell off from Him as if He were not altogether of themselves, as truly He was not. He was used to stand alone. It was the habit of an unbeginning eternity. When men tacitly permit another's right to be alone, and not to mingle with the crowd, it is because their instincts divine something in Him which is entitled to the homage either of their love or of their fear.

He was passive when men abandoned him. When he was active and offered Himself to them, they rejected Him. Has not this been God's history with His creatures from the first, independently of the Incarnation, if any passage in the history of Creation can be said to be independent of it? Awful as is the guilt of this rejection, it glorifies God unconsciously, and beyond its own intention, even like the despair of those who have chosen to hide themselves from him in everlasting exile. It is a mark by which we may measure how far the finite falls off from the Infinite. It is a token of the magnificent incomprehensibility of God. It is the wickedness of ignorance which rejects God.

The secrecy of Bethlehem is no less becoming to the inscrutable majesty of God. He is invisible because created eye can not see Him. He shrouds Himself when He works, lest creation should be blinded with the very reflection from His laboratories. He needs to wear no other veil than His own wondrous nature. The brightness of His uncreated sanctity is a more impenetrable concealment than the darkness of the old chaos. Secrecy alone becomes so great a majesty, so resplendent a beauty, so unutterable a sanctity as his. All revelation is on God's part a condescension. If we may dare so to speak, it is rather love which humbles Him to disclose His goodness, than glory which constrains Him to manifest His greatness.

Last of all, mortification also is becoming to the majesty of God. Even had He come not to suffer; but in a glorious, blissful, impassible Incarnation, He would surely have moved amidst the sensible delights and lovelinesses of earth as the sunbeam moves through the wood, gilding trunk and leaf, ferny dell and mossy bank, the stony falls of the brook and the tapestry of wild flowers, the pageant of the bright insects and the plumage of the shy birds, yet not mingling itself with any of them, giving beauty, not taking it, coloring all things, yet admitting no color into its own translucent whiteness, a heavenly yet an earthly thing, a loving light upon us and among us, intimate, familiar, independent, universal, and yet unsullied. There is a mortification which is a fight for freedom. Such a mortification could in no way belong to our Blessed Lord. There is also a mortification which is the full liberty of holiness; and such

was His. It was not that He did not assume our senses, and the sensible passions of our lives, but that He bore Himself as becoming God toward those outward things. God reveals Himself to us as wishing, yet not constraining our freedom so as to secure His desires; as claiming rights, yet contenting Himself with what is far below His claim; as giving grace and letting men make waste of its abundance; as pleading when it would have seemed more natural to command; as coveting the hearts of men, yet being unspeakably less rich in His creatures' love than He craves to be, as compassing whole creations in His nets of love, and taking but a partial prey. What is all this but something of which mortification is a created shadow? Surely there is no truth we need in these times to lay to heart more strongly, than that the character of Jesus is the character of the invisible God, and the fashions of the Incarnation, the fashions also of the Divine Incomprehensibility. What truth holds more teaching than this? What teaching refutes at once a greater number of untruths, and those, too, the special errors of our day?

But why are we lingering so long on the threshold of the great event? Mary has looked upon the Face of the Incarnate God. In one glance she has read there voluminous wonders of heaven, and yet sees that its loveliness is inexhaustible. The Vision has surpassed all expectations, even such expectations as hers. She gazes, and as she gazes she can understand how the mightiest spirits of angels and of men in the full-grown stature of their imperishable glory will unfold themselves in the sunlight of that beautiful Countenance, and feed forever on the manifold ex-

pression of its sweet worshipful solemnity. Her first act was an act of love—the love of adoration. In adoring the divine perfections of the new-born Babe, we may well believe that Mary worshipped particularly those attributes seemingly most opposed to His infant state. The instincts of prayer would lead her that way. The very circumstances of the mystery would suggest it. She adored profoundly the eternity of Him who was but one minute old. She congratulated Him in the boldness of holy love on His having been from everlasting co-eternal with the Father, and at the same time eternally a Son. She exulted in the knowledge that from all eternity her Babe had with the Father breathed forth the Holy Ghost, and had been with the Father the principle from which the co-eternal Spirit had proceeded, and was forever proceeding, and was to proceed for all eternity. It was a joy to her that time, old as it was, was a younger birth than Him, whose birth in time was one short minute since. She was abased with sweetest reverence when she looked into His childish Face, and with delighted faith hailed Him as time's Creator.

Joseph likewise draws near to adore. His vast soul fills silently with love, and his life would have broken and ebbed away at the Infant's feet upon the floor of the Cave as it did years afterward on His lap, but the time was not come, and the Babe sanctified him anew and fortified him with amazing quiet strength and robust gentleness, and raised him into a higher sphere of holiness and of grace.

Who shall dare to guess what Jesus thought with His human thoughts, as He lay there for a moment

on the ground? The whole history of creation past, present, and to come was before Him. He was busy worshipping, He was busy redeeming, He was busy judging at that moment. All hearts of men lay in His Heart at that hour. We too were there, centred in a little sphere of His loving knowledge, and His merciful consideration. We too were inmates of the Cave of Bethlehem, and of the Cave's divinest centre—the Heart of the new-born Babe. Is not that thought enough to set the rudder of our life heavenward, once for all?

Thus it was that the Creator came forth to be as it were a part of His own visible creation. But how did His creation receive Him? What welcome could it give Him. What response did it make to the mystery of Bethlehem? A response altogether worthy of Him it could not be. But it welcomed Him as it best could, and it was very gloriously. Mary's first act of worship met Him the very moment he was born. Joseph also had worshipped Him as no saint before had done. From his deep calm soul he had poured out a very ocean of tenderest, humblest love. The choirs of angels also sang out loud in the midnight heavens, while the winter night ran over with the sweetness of their strains. Every note in their music, every pulse in their exulting song, represented a whole world of supernatural acts in their mighty spirits,—acts of love, of complacency, of worship, of adoring gratulation, of self-oblivious jubilee. Never had creation been so wonderful as it was that night! Never had it gathered round its God so gloriously as it did then! Never did it look less imperfect than when at that still hour it strove to lift itself to the

height of the grand mystery, and while it fell short infinitely, yet it fell short worthily. Who would have dreamed that finite worship could be so nearly infinite as it was that night? Oh, joyous thought, oh grateful remembrance, that Jesus was thus welcomed into the world!

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST WORSHIPPERS.

If we think of the different ways in which our loving fear could approach the Cave of Bethlehem, we shall find on reflection perhaps that there are nine spirits of devotion which take possession of our souls. There are nine attitudes in which our hearts will naturally put themselves before the Babe. The genius of the sanctuary seems ninefold. It is not easy to express these nine loves, these nine worships, in words; for not only does one follow hard upon another, but they borrow from each other, pass off into each other, return upon each other, reflect or anticipate each other, blend, intermingle, and melt into one, after such a marvellous and characteristically divine fashion, that it is impossible to define them. To portray them is as much as we can do. Now when we come to the historical Bethlehem, we find as a matter of fact that the first worshippers there may be said to be nine in number, a coincidence which seems to raise our ninefold division of the devotion to the Sacred Infancy to something more than a devotional conjecture. As there were nine choirs of angels round the throne of the Eternal Word in heaven, so were there in type and semblance at least, nine choirs

of worshippers round the Incarnate Word in Bethlehem. Nine choirs of angels sang in heaven, nine kinds of worshippers silently adored on earth.

Our Blessed Lady presents us with the first type of devotion to the Sacred Infancy. The distinguishing characteristic of her worship of Jesus was its humility. Those who are raised on high have a lower depth to which they can stoop, than those whom grace has simply lifted out of the abyss, and left almost on its brink. But, independently of this, great sanctity seems to have a power of humiliation which is the result of all its combined graces, and not of any one of them in particular. For both these reasons Mary's humility has no parallel among the saints. It was through her humility that Mary received her various sanctifications. Indeed it was through her humility that she became the Mother of God. The love of that grace fixed the eye of the Word, the eye of His eternal choice on her. He looked upon the lowliness of His handmaid. We speak of great graces raising us up on high; but our language would express more truth if we spoke rather of their sinking us deep in God. To sink in our own nothingness, provided we love while we are sinking, is to sink deep in God. When we sink out of sight in Him, not only out of sight of the world, but also, and much more, out of sight of self, then is our life really hidden in God, and hidden there with Christ. In the creature humility is the infallible accompaniment of nearness to the Creator. It is the only created thing which enables creatures to live in the atmosphere which is immediately around the Throne. When therefore the august majesty of the

Eternal lay awfully furled within her bosom, the humility which possessed her whole soul, must plainly have been beyond our conceptions of that heavenly grace. Yet when she beheld her own Son, her new-born Babe lying on the ground, and remembered that He was truly none other than the everlasting God, and the very Son of her own substance, she must at once have sunk into fresh and nameless depths of abjection.

The first fruit of humility is joy. The grace which we find in the depths to which we sink is spiritual buoyancy, and our lightness of spirit is in proportion to the profoundness of our abasement. A mother's joy over her first-born has passed into a proverb. But no creature ever rejoiced as Mary did. No joy was ever so deep, so holy, so beautiful as hers. It was the joy of possessing God in a way which none had possessed Him heretofore, a way which was the grandest work of His wisdom and power, the greatest height of His inexplicable love of creatures. It was the joy of the beauty of Jesus, of the ravishing sweetness of His Countenance, of the glorious mystery of every look and touch of Him, of the thrilling privileges of her maternal love, and of the contagion of His unspeakable joy, which passed from His soul into hers. The whole world, by right of its creation, by right of having been created by a God so illimitably and adorably good, is a world of joy. Joy is so completely its nature that it can hardly help itself. It blossoms into joy without knowing what it is doing. It has not a line or form about it which is not beautiful. It leaps up to the sunshine, and when it opens itself it opens in vernal greenness, in summer

flowers, in autumnal fruits, and then rest again for its winter rest, like a happy cradled infant, under its snowy coverlet adorned with fairy-like crystals, while the pageantry of the gorgeous storms only makes music round its unbroken slumber. Nature and life tend to joy at all hours. Joy is their legitimate development, their proper perfection,—in fact the very law of living; for the bare act of living is itself an inestimable joy. Nothing glorifies God so much as joy. See how the perfume lingers in the withered flower; it is the angel of joy who can not take heart to wing his flight back from earth to heaven, even when his task is done. It is self which has marred this joy. It is the worship of self, the perpetual remembrance of self, the making self a centre, which has weighed the world down in its jubilee, and almost overballasted it with sadness. It is humility above all other things which weakens or snaps asunder the hold fasts of selfishness. A lowly spirit is of necessity an unselfish one. Humility is a perpetual presence of God; and how can self be otherwise than forgotten there? An humble man is a joyous man. He is in the world like a child who claims no rights, and questions not the rights of God, but simply lives and expands in the sunshine round about him. The little one does not even claim the right to be happy; happiness comes to him as a fact, or rather as a gracious law, and he is happy without knowing of his happiness, which is the truest happiness of all. So is it with him whom humility has sanctified. Moreover, as joy was the original intent of creation, it must be an essential element in all worship of the Creator. Nay, is it not almost a definition of grace,—

the rejoicing in what is sad to fallen nature, because of the Creator's will? Thus Mary's devotion to the Babe of Bethlehem was one of transcending joy. There is no worship where there is no joy. For worship is something more than either the fear of God, or the love of Him. It is delight in Him.

St. Joseph presents us with a similar yet somewhat different type of devotion to the Sacred Infancy. To be hidden in God, to be lost in His bright light, is surely the highest of vocations among the sons of men. Nothing, to a spiritually discerning eye, can surpass the grandeur of a life which is only for others, only ministering to the divine purposes as in the place of God, without any personal vocation or any purpose of its own. This, in its measure, was Joseph's vocation. He lives now only to serve the Infant Jesus, as heretofore he has lived but to guard Mary. He is, as it were, the head of the Holy Family, only that he may the more completely be the servant, and the subject, and the instrument. Moreover he makes way for Jesus, when Jesus comes of age. He passes noiselessly into the shadow of eternity, like the moon behind a cloud, complaining not that her silver light is intercepted. He does not live on to the days of the miracles and the preaching, much less to the fearful grandeurs of Gethsemane and Calvary. His spirit is the spirit of Bethlehem. He is, in an especial way, the property of the Sacred Infancy. It was his one work, his single sphere.

We find our third type of devotion to the Infant Jesus in St. John the Baptist. As to Joseph, so also to John, Jesus came through Mary. John worshipped behind the veil Him who also from be-

behind the veil had absolved him from his original sin, had broken his fetters, fulfilled him with eminent holiness, and anointed him to be His own immediate Precursor. He, too, like Joseph, was simply to be an instrument. He too, was to prepare the way for the Child of Bethlehem. His light was to fade, as the light of Jesus grew fuller on the sight of men. He too,—strange tenant of the wilderness in grotesque apparel, companion of angels and of wild beasts, and a feeder on savage food!—he too was to be hidden from the gaze of men during the long first years of his life, as Joseph had been. Like Joseph, the Baptist was withdrawn from Calvary, and stood on the borders of the Gospel light, only half emerging from the shadows of the Old Testament. Like Joseph he was bidden to be our Lord's superior, but, with humility unlike that of Joseph, and yet a veritable humility, he argued against his own elevation, and bowed only to the gentle command of Him who sought baptism at his hands, and gave for others a cleansing sacramental power to the water that could but simulate ablution to his spotless soul. He was a light that burned as well as shone, and of him it was that the Incarnate Word declared that none born of woman had yet been so great as he. He also belongs, like Joseph, to the Sacred Infancy, handing over his followers to Jesus, ending where his Lord began, like the moon setting as the sun rises, and, like the Holy Innocents, worshipping his Saviour with his blood.

Attraction to St. John the Baptist is one of the ways to Jesus, and a way of His own appointment, and upon which therefore a peculiar blessing rests. He was chosen to prepare men's hearts to be the

thrones of their Lord. It was even he who laid the foundations of the college of the Apostles in Peter and Andrew and John who were his disciples. Attractiveness was hung around the Baptist like a spell. In what did it consist? Doubtless in gifts of nature as well as grace; for such is God's way. Yet it is difficult to see in what it resided. As the world counts things, he was an uncouth man. The savage air of the wilderness affected his rugged sweetness. His austerity, we might have imagined, had not the lives of the Saints in all ages taught us differently, would have driven men away from him, either as an example or a teacher. His teaching was ungrateful to corrupt nature. It was reforming, unsparing, and dealt mainly in condemnations. Its manner was vehement, abrupt, and singularly without respect of persons. Yet all men gathered near him, even while he taught that his teaching was not final, that his mission was but a preparation, and that he was not the deliverer whom they sought. All classes, trades, ranks, and professions fluttered round him, like moths round the candle, sure to be scorched by his severity, yet whether they would or not, attracted to his light. What could his attraction be, but the sweet spirit of Bethlehem, the spirit of exultation, of generosity, of the freshness of abounding grace? The whole being of that austere man, most awe-inspiring as he was of all anchorets that ever were, was overflowed with gladness. It was said of him before he was born, that at his birth men should rejoice; and yet there seemed no obvious reason that it should be so. When he heard the sound of Mary's voice, he leaped with exultation in his mother's womb. It was the

gladness of grace. It was the triumph of redeeming love. It was the first and freshest victory of the little Conqueror of Bethlehem.

Our fourth type of devotion to the Sacred Infancy is to be found in the Angels. How beautiful to our eyes is that vast angelic world, with its various Kingdoms of holy wonders, and of spiritual magnificence. It is not only sweet to learn of those whose companions in bliss we hope some day to be, and one of whose royal princes is ever at our side even now, ennobling rather than demeaning Himself by ministries of secret love. But it is sweeter still to know so much more of God as even our imperfect theology of the Angels can teach us. No one knows the loveliness of moonlight till he has beheld it on the sea. So does the ocean of angelic life on its clear field of boundless waters reflect, and as it were magnify by its reflection, the shining of God's glory. They come nearest to God, and it is one of the rubrics of heaven's service that the incense of men's prayers should be burned before God by Angels. Yet they are our kin. We look up to them more as elder brothers than as creatures set far apart from us by the pre-eminence of their natures. We love them with a yearning love, we make sure of being the comrades of their eternal joys.

It is not possible for us to apprehend all the spiritual beauty which lay deep down, glorifying God, in this devotion of the Angels. It was plainly a devotion of joy, of such joy as Angels can feel. It was joy in a mystery long pondered, long expected, yet whose glory took them by surprise when at length it came. It was a joy that so much was now fulfilled,

and also that God had, as usual, so outstripped all hopes in the fulfilment. It was a joy full of unselfishness toward men, whose nature was at that moment so gently, yet so irresistibly, triumphing over theirs. In their song they made no mention of themselves,—only of God in the highest and then of men on earth. How beautiful, how holy, is this silence about themselves! They gave way to their younger brothers with the infinite gracefulness which nothing but genuine superiority can show. It was a joy full of intelligent adoration of the Word. It was more like an outburst of grandeur which they could not help, than an offering of deliberate and meditative worship. It was the overflow of heaven seeking fresh room for itself on earth.

From the Angels who sang we pass to the Shepherds who heard their heavenly songs,—a simple audience, yet such as does not ill assort with a divine election. They are our fifth type of devotion to the Sacred Infancy. We know nothing of their antecedents. We know nothing of what followed their privileged worship of the Babe. They come out of the cloud for a moment. We see them in the starlight of a clear winter night. A divine halo is round them. They are chosen from among men. An angel spoke to them, and they were neither humbled by it nor elated; they are only afraid of the great light around them. It was as much a matter of course to them, so far as belief in the intelligence, as if some belated peasant neighbor had passed by them on their pastoral watch, and told them some strange news. To simple minds, as to deep ones, every thing is its own evidence. They heard the angelic chorus, and

were soothed by it, and yet reflected not upon the honor done themselves who were permitted to be its audience. Theirs was the simplicity of a child-like holiness, which does not care to discriminate between the natural and the supernatural. Their restful souls were all life long becalmed in the thought of God.

The faith and promptitude of simplicity are not less heroic than those of wisdom. The Shepherds fell not below the Kings in the exercise of these great virtues. But there was less self-consciousness in the promptitude of the Shepherds than in the marvellous docility and swift sacrifice of the Kings. They represent also the place which simplicity occupies in the kingdom of Christ; for next to that of Mary and Joseph, theirs was the first external worship earth offered to the Babe of Bethlehem. Simplicity comes very near to God, because boldness is one of its most congenial graces. It comes near, because it is not dreaming how near it comes. It does not think of itself at all, even to realize its own unworthiness; and therefore it hastens, when a more self-conscious reverence would be slow. Such souls are not so much humble as they are simple. The same end is attained in them by a different grace, producing a kindred yet almost a more beautiful holiness. In like manner as simplicity is to them in the place of humility, joy often satisfies in them the claims of adoration. They come to God in an artless way, and when they have come they simply rejoice, and nothing more. It is their way of adoring Him. They are forever children, and by an instinct haunt the Sanctuaries of the Sacred Infancy.

How beautifully, too, is our Lord's attraction to the lowly, represented in the call of these rough, child-like,

pastoral men? Outside the Cave He calls the Shepherds first of all. They were men who have lived in the habits of the meek creatures they tend, until their inward life has caught habits of a kindred sort. They are poor and hardy, nursed in solitude and on scant living, dwellers out of doors, and not in the bright cheer of domestic homes. Such are the men the Babe calls first, and they come as their sheep would come to their own call. God loves the praises of the lowly. There is something grateful to Him in the faith, something confiding in the love, which emboldens the lowly to offer to Him the tribute of their praise. He loves also the praises of the gently, meekly happy. Happiness is the temper of holiness; and if the voice of patient anguish is praise to God, much more is the clear voice of happiness, a happiness that fastens not on created things, but is centred in Himself. They have hardly laid hold on God who are not supremely happy even in the midst of an inferior and sensible unhappiness. The very simplicity of the Shepherds would not let them keep their praise a secret to themselves. If there are saints who keep secrets for God's glory, there are saints also whose way of worshipping His glory, is to tell the wonders which he has let them see. Hence the Shepherds were the first Apostles, the Apostles of the Sacred Infancy.

But now a change comes over the scene, which seems at first sight but little in keeping with the characteristic lowliness of Bethlehem. A cavalcade from the far East comes up this way. The camel bells are tinkling. A retinue of attendants accompanies three Kings of different Oriental tribes, who come with their various offerings to the new-born Babe.

These swarthy men are among the wisest of the studious East. They represent the lore and science of the day. Yet have they done what the world would surely esteem the most foolish of actions. They were men whose science led them to God ; men, we may be sure, of meditative habits, of ascetic lives, of habitual prayer. The fragments of early tradition and the obscure records of ancient prophecies, belonging to their nations, have been to them as precious deposits which spoke of God and were filled with hidden truth. The corruption of the world which they, as Kings, might see from their elevation, far and wide, pressed heavily upon their loving hearts. They too pined for a Redeemer, for some heavenly Visitant, for a new beginning of the world, for the coming of a Son of God, for One who should save them from their sins. Their tribes doubtless lived in close alliance, and they themselves were bound together by the ties of a friendship which the same pure yearnings after greater goodness and higher things cemented. Never yet had Kings more royal souls. In the dark blue of the lustrous sky there rose a new or hitherto unnoticed star. Its apparition could not escape the notice of these Oriental sages, who nightly watched the skies, for their science was also their theology. It was the star of which an ancient prophecy had spoken. Perhaps it trailed a line of light after it slowly, yet with visible movement, and so little above the horizon, or with such obvious downward slanting course, that it seemed as if it beckoned to them, as if an angel were bearing a lamp to light the feet of pilgrims, and timed his going to their slowness, and had not shot too far ahead dur-

ing the bright day, but was found and welcomed each night as a faithful indicator pointing to the Cave of Bethlehem. How often God prefers to teach by night rather than by day! Meanwhile, doubtless, the instincts of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of these wise rulers drew them toward the star. Wild and romantic as the conduct of these wise enthusiasts seemed, they did not hesitate. After due counsel they pronounced the luminous finger to be the star of the old prophecy, and therefore God was come. They left their homes, their state and their affairs, and journeyed westward they knew not whither, led nightly by the star that slipped onward in its silent groove. They were the representatives of the heathen world moving forward to the feet of the universal Saviour. They came to the gates of Jerusalem, and there God did honor to His Church. He withdrew the guidance of the star, because now the better guidance of the Synagogue was at their command. The oracles of the law pronounced that Bethlehem was to be the birthplace of Messias; and the wise men passed onward to the humble village. Again the star shone out in the blue heavens, and slowly sank earthward over the Cave of Bethlehem; and presently the devout Kings were at the feet of Jesus.

It would take a whole volume to comment, to the full, on this sweet legend of the Gospel. The Babe, it seems, will move the heights of the world as well as the lowlands. He will now call wisdom to His crib, as He but lately called simplicity. Yet how different is this call! For wise men and for Kings some signs were wanted, and because they were wise Kings, scientific signs. As the sweet patience and obscure

hardships of a lowly life prepared the souls of the Shepherds, so to the Kings their years of Oriental lore were as the preparation of the Gospel.

The grand characteristic of their devotion was its faith. Next to Peter's and to Abraham's, there never in the world was faith like theirs; faith is what strikes us in them at every turn, and faith that was from the first heroic. Had they not all their lives long been out-looking for the Promised One? and what was that but faith? They rested in faith on the old traditions which their Bedouin or Hindoo tribes had kept. They had utter faith in the ancient prophecies. They had faith in the star when they beheld it, and such faith that no worldly considerations could stand before its face. The star led them on by inland track or by ribbed sea-shore, but their faith never wavered. It disappeared at Jerusalem, and straightway every thing about them was at fault except their faith. The star had gone. Faith sought the Synagogue, and acted on the words of the teachers. Faith lighted up the Cave when they entered it, and let them not be scandalized with the scandal of the cross. They had faith in the warning that came to them by dream, and they obeyed. Faith is the quickest of all learners; for it soon loses itself in that love which sees and understands all things at a glance. How many men think to cure their spiritual ills by increasing their love, when they had better be cultivating their faith! So in this one visit to Bethlehem the Kings learned the whole Gospel.

We must mark also how detachment went along with faith,—detachment from home, from royalty, from popularity, from life itself. So it always is

Faith and detachment are inseparable graces. They are twins of the soul, and grow together, and are so like they can hardly be distinguished, and they live together in such one hearted sympathy that it seems as if they had but one life between them and must needs die together. Detachment is the right grace for the rich, the right grace for the noble, the right grace for the learned. Let us feed our faith, and so shall we become detached. He who is ever looking with straining eyes at the far mountains of the happy land beyond the sea cheats himself of many a mile of weary distance; and while the slant columns of white wavering rain are sounding over the treeless moorland and beating like scourges upon him, he is away in the green sunshine that he sees beyond the gulf, and the storm growls past him as if it felt he was no victim. This is the picture of detachment forgetting all things in the sweet company of its elder twin-brother faith. Thus may we say of these three royal sages, that their devotion was, as the wise man's devotion always is, one of faith up to seeming folly, and of generosity up to romance.

But our seventh type of devotion to the Sacred Infancy brings us to a very different picture. We must pass to the glorious courts of the magnificent Temple when its little unknown Master has come to take possession, the true High Priest, with a thicker veil of incredible humiliation round Him, than that which shrouded the local Holy of holies from the gazing multitude. It is the mystery of the Presentation of our Lord. The Babe's new worshippers are Simeon and Anna, who so resemble each other amid their differences that we may regard them as forming one

type of worship. Anna was a widow of the tribe of Aser, who filled no place in the public eye, but in whom her little circle of friends had recognized and revered the spirit of prophecy from time to time. She had thus an obscure sphere of influence of her own. She was a figure familiar to the eyes of many in Jerusalem whose piety led them to the morning sacrifices in the Temple. Bowed down with the weight of fourscore years and four, her own house was not her home,—even if she had a house she could call her own. The Temple was her home; it was rarely that she left its hallowed precincts. Prayer was the work of her life. Herod most likely had never heard of her, but she was dear to God, and was known honorably to His servants; God has widows like her in all Christian cities.

Simeon also was worn out with age and watching. He had placed himself on the battlements of Sion, and while his eyes were filled with the sweet tears of prayer, he was ever looking out for Messiah that was to come. Good people knew him well, and they said of him that he was a just man. Even and fair, striving for nothing, claiming no privileges, ready to give way, most careful to be prompt and full and considerate and timely in all his dealings with others, giving no ground for complaint to any one, modest and self-possessed, attentive yet unobtrusive, such was the character he bore among those of his religious fellow-citizens to whom he was known. But to the edification of his justice, he added the beautiful and captivating example of the tenderest piety. Devotion was the very life of his soul. The gift of piety reigned in his heart. Like many holy persons, he

had set his affections on what seemed like an earthly beatific vision. He must see the Lord's Christ before he dies. There is a look of something obstinate and fanciful in his devotion: it is in reality a height of holiness. He has cast his spiritual life in one mould; it was a life of desire, a life of watching, a life of long-delayed, but never despondent, waiting for the consolation of Israel. There is an humble pertinacity about his prayer, which is to bend God's will to his own. It was revealed to him that his waiting had been a dear worship to God, and that he should see with his aged eyes the beauty of the Lord's Christ before he was called away from earth. He was therefore a haunter of the Temple; for where should he be more likely to meet the Christ than there? How God always gives more than He promises! Simeon did not only see the Christ, but was allowed to take Him up in his arms, and, doubtless, to print a kiss of trembling reverence upon the Creator's human lips. How else could his lips have ever sung so beautiful a song,—a song so sunset-like that one might believe all the beauty of all earth's beautiful evenings since creation had gone into it to fill it full of peaceful spells? He was old for a poet, but his age had not dried or drained his heart.

There is a little world of such souls as Simeon and Anna within the Church. But it lies deep down, and its inmates are seldom brought to the light. It is a subterranean world, the diamond-mine of the Church, from whose caverns a stone of wondrous lustre is taken now and then to feed our faith, to reveal to us the abundant though hidden operations of grace, and to comfort us when the world's wick-

edness and our own depress us, by showing that God has pastures of his own under our very feet, where His glory feeds without our seeing it. So that, as sight goes for little in the world of faith, in nothing does it go for less than in the seeming evil of the world. Everywhere evil is undermined by good. It is only that good is undermost; and this is one of the supernatural conditions of God's presence. As much evil as we see, so much good, or more, we do know assuredly lies under it, which, if not equal to the evil in extent, is far greater in weight and power and worth and substance. Evil makes more show, and thus has a look of victory; while good is daily outwitting evil by simulating defeat. We must never think of the Church without allowing largely for the extent of obscure piety, the sphere of hidden souls. We can form no intellectual judgment of the abundance of grace, of the number of the saved, or of the inward beauty of individual souls which even intellectually is worth any thing, unless we form our estimate in the light of prayer. Charity is the truest truth; and the judgments of charity are large.

But besides this long preparation for a momentary and subordinate appearance in a divine mystery, we must observe also, how God often comes to men in old age. They have lived for that which only comes when real life seems past. What a divine meaning there is in all this? The significance of a whole life often comes uppermost only in the preparation for death. If there are some who seem to have done their work early, and then live on we know not why, there are far more who do their real work late on, and not a few who only do it in the act of dying

Nay, is it not almost so in natural things? Life for the most part blooms only once, and like the aloe it blooms late.

Neither must we fail to notice under what circumstances it is God's habit to come to these hidden souls. The devotion of Simeon and Anna is eminently a devotion of prayer and church-frequenting. In other words, God comes to holy souls, not so much in heroic actions, which are rather the souls leaping upward to God, but in the performance of ordinary, habitual devotions, and the discharge of modest, unobtrusive duties, made heroic by long perseverance and inward intensity. How much matter for thought is there in all these reflections! and in divine things what is matter for thought is matter for practice also!

Simeon and Anna lived long lives before they reached their work, and it was laid gently at their doors at the very extremity of life. The lot of the Innocents was the reverse of this. They were just born, and their mission was handed to them instantly and abruptly, and its fulfilment was death. Yet in what a sense is it true of all of us that we are but born to die! Happy they who find the great wisdom which lies in that little truth. But there was more than this in their likeness to our Lord. In one way they outstripped Him. They died for Him as He died for all. They paid Him back the life He laid down for them. Nay, they were beforehand with Him, for they laid their lives down for Him, before He laid His down for them. They put off His Calvary. Yet, again, is there not a sense in which we all pay our dear Lord back with our lives for the life that He

gave us? What is a Christian life but a lingering death, of which physical death is but the last consummating act? and if it be not all for Christ, how is it a Christian life? nevertheless, in the historical reality of all this lies the grand prerogative of the Holy Innocents.

They are still types to us of that devotion so common among the higher saints, the devotion of almost unconscious mortification. They are like those who commit themselves to God, and then take what is sure to come. They not only commit themselves to Him without conditions, but they do not count the cost, because to them His love is cheaply bought at the price of all possible sacrifices. Hence there is no cost to count. The truest mortification does not forecast, because it is self-oblivious. Thus it was with James and John when they offered to drink our Saviour's cup; and how heroically they did drink it when it came! These infant martyrs represent also what must in its measure befall every one who draws near to Jesus. Suffering goes out from Him like an atmosphere. To be near Jesus was the height of happiness, yet it was also both a necessity and a privilege of suffering. We can not spare the Holy Innocents from the beautiful world of Bethlehem. Next to Mary and Joseph we could take them away least all. Without them we should read the riddle of the Incarnation wrongly, missing many of its deepest laws. They are symbols to us of the necessities of nearness to our Lord. They are living laws of the vicinity of Jesus. Softened through long ages, the mothers' cries, and the children's moans come to us almost as a sad strain of music, sweeter than it is sad.

sweet even because it is sad, the moving elegy of Bethlehem.

There is still another presence in the Cave of Bethlehem which is a type of devotion to the Sacred Infancy. Deep withdrawn into the shade, so as to be scarcely visible, stands one who is gazing on all the mysteries with holy amazement and tenderest rapture. He takes no part in any of them. His attitude is one of mute observance. He is like one of those shadowy figures, which painters sometimes introduce into their pictures rather as suggesting something to the beholder than as historically part of the action represented. It is St. Luke, the "beloved physician" of St. Paul, and the first Christian Painter. He forms a type of worship by himself, and must not be detached from the other eight, though he was out of time with them. To us he is an essential feature of Bethlehem. The Holy Ghost had selected him to be the historiographer of the Sacred Infancy. Without him we should have known nothing of the Holy Childhood, except the startling visit of the three heathen kings, which was so deeply impressed on St. Matthew's Hebrew imagination, together with the massacre of the Innocents and the flight into Egypt which were the consequences of that visit, and so part of the one history. In the vision of inspiration the Holy Ghost renewed to him the world of Bethlehem and the sweet spiritual pageantry of all the gentle mysteries. To him, the first artist of the Church, we fitly owe the three songs of the Gospel, the Magnificat, the Benedictus, and the Nunc Dimittis. He was as much the Evangelist of the Sacred Infancy, as St. John was the Evangelist of the Word's Divinity, or St.

Matthew and St. Mark of the active life of our blessed Lord.

He represents the devotion of artists, and the posture of Christian art at the feet of the Incarnate Saviour. Christian art rightly considered is at once a theology and a worship; a theology which has its own method of teaching, its own way of representation, its own devout discoveries, its own varying opinions, all of which are beautiful, so long as they are in subordination to the mind of the Church. What is the Blessed John of Fiesole's Life of Christ, but next to St. Thomas, the most magnificent treatise on the Incarnation which was ever conceived or composed? No one can study it without learning new truths each time. It gives up slowly and by degrees to the loving eye the rich treasures of a master-mind, full of depth and tenderness and truth and heavenly ideal.

Of a truth art is a revelation from heaven, and a mighty power for God. It is a merciful disclosure to men of His more hidden beauty. It brings out things in God which lie too deep for words. In virtue of its heavenly origin, it has a special grace to purify men's souls, and to unite them to God, by first making them unearthly. If art debased is the earthliest of things, true art, not unmindful that it also like our Lord was born in Bethlehem, and cradled with Him there, is an influence in the soul, so heavenly that it almost seems akin to grace. It is a worship too, as well as a theology. From what abyss rose those marvellous forms upon the eye of John of Fiesole,—except from the depths of prayer? Have we not often seen the Mother and her Blessed Child so depicted that it was plain

they never were the fruit of prayer, and do we not instinctively condemn them even on the score of art, without directly adverting to religious feeling? The temple of art is a temple of adoration. Only an humble man can paint divine things grandly. His types are delicate and easily missed, shifting under the least pressure, and bending unless handled softly. An artist, who is not joined to God, may work wonders of genius with his pencil and colors: but the heavenly spirit, the essence of Christian art will have evaporated from his work. It may remain to future generations as a trophy of anatomy, and a triumph of peculiar coloring; but it will not remain as a source of holiest inspiration to Christian minds, and an ever-flowing fountain of the glory of God. It may be admired in the gallery: it would offend over the altar. Theology and devotion both owe a heavy debt to art, but it is as parents owe debts to their loving children. They take as gifts what came from themselves, and they love to consider that what is due to them by justice, is rather paid to them out of the spontaneous generosity of love. St. Luke is the type and the symbol of this true art, which is the child of devotion and theology; and it is significant that he is thus connected with the world of Bethlehem.

Such were the first worshippers of Bethlehem, nine types of devotion showed to us there full of spiritual loveliness and attraction: nine separate seas that image heaven in their own way, or form altogether one harmonious ocean of worship of the Incarnate Word. We may join ourselves first to one, and then to another, of these nine choirs of first worshippers, and adore the Incarnate Word. How wonderful is

the variety of devotion!—more endless than the variations of light and shade, or the ever-shifting processions of the graceful clouds, or the never twice-repeated tracery of the forest architecture, as endless apparently as the excellences of Him who is the centre of all devotion! We may venture not uninvited into the dear sanctuary of Bethlehem, and be as heart to Mary, or as thought to Joseph, as voice to John, or as harps to the Angels, as sheep to the Shepherds, or as incense to the Kings, as sweet sights to Simeon and to Anna, or as soft sighs to the Holy Innocents, or as a pen for Luke to write with, and to write of the Babe of Bethlehem. Is it not a beautiful sea of tranquildest devotion, with the spirit of Bethlehem setting down over the purple of its waters, like one of those silent sunsets which are so beautiful that it seems as if they ought to make music in the air?

PART III.

REDEMPTION THROUGH THE PRECIOUS BLOOD.

CHAPTER I.

THE MYSTERY OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD.

“Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.” Who else but Jesus can do this, and what else even from Him do we require but this? For in this lies all things which we can desire. Of all miseries the bondage of sin is the most miserable. It is worse than sorrow, worse than pain. It is such a ruin that no other ruin is like unto it. It troubles all the peace of life. It turns sunshine into darkness. It embitters all pleasant fountains, and poisons the very blessings of God which should have been for our healing. It doubles the burdens of life, which are heavy enough already. It makes death a terror and a torture, and the eternity beyond the grave an infinite and intolerable blackness. Alas! we have felt the weightiness of sin, and know that there is nothing like it. Life has brought many sorrows to us and many fears. Our hearts have ached a thousand times. Tears have flowed. Sleep has fled. But never have we felt any thing like the dead weight of

sin. What must be a death in sin ? What the irrevocable eternity of unretracted sin ?

From all this horror whither shall we look for deliverance ? Not to ourselves ; for we know the practical infinity of our weakness, and the incorrigible vitality of our corruption. Not to any earthly power, for it has no jurisdiction here. Not to philosophy, literature, or science ; for in this case they are but sorry and unhelpful matters. Not to any saint, however holy, nor to any angel, however mighty ; for the least sin is a bigger mountain than they have faculties to move. Neither may we look for deliverance direct from the patience and compassion of God Himself ; for in the abysses of His wisdom it has been decreed, that without shedding of blood there shall be no remission of sin. It is from the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ alone that our salvation comes. Out of the immensity of its merits, out of the inexhaustible treasures of its satisfactions, because of that dear combination of its priceless worth, and its benignant prodigality, we miserable sinners are raised out of the depths of our wretchedness, and restored to the peace and favor of our Heavenly Father.

Is hope sweet where despair had almost begun to reign ? Is it a joy to be emancipated from a shameful slavery, or set free from a noxious dungeon ? Is it gladness to be raised as if by miracle from a bed of feebleness and suffering, to sudden health, and instantaneous vigor ? Then what a gladness must salvation be ! For as there is no earthly misery like sin, so is there no deliverance like that with which Jesus makes us free. Words will not tell it. Thought only can think it, and it must be thought out of an

enlightened mind and a burning heart, dwelt on for a long, long while. The first moment after death is a moment which must infallibly come to every one of us. Earth lies behind us, silently wheeling its obedient way through the black-tented space. The measureless spaces of eternity lie outstretched before us. The words of our sentence have scarcely floated away into silence. It is a sentence of salvation. The great risk has been run, and we are saved. God's power is holding our soul lest it should die of gladness. It can not take in the whole of its eternity. The least accidental joy is a world of beatitude in itself. The blaze of the vision is overwhelming. Then the truth that eternity is eternal—this is so hard to master. Yet all this is only what we mean when we pronounce the word salvation. How hideous the difference of that first moment after death if we had not been saved! It turns us cold to think of it. But we have seen the face of Jesus, and the light in His eyes, and the smile upon His face, and the words upon His lips were salvation.

But there are some who do not feel that sin is such a horror or captivity. They say it lays no weight upon their hearts. They say their lives are full of sunshine, and that time flows with them as the merry rivulet runs in summer with a soothing brawl over its colored stones, and its waters glancing in the sun. They say it is so with them, and truly they should know best. Yet I hardly believe them. If they are happy it is only by fits and starts; and then not with a complete happiness. There is ever an upbraiding voice within. An habitual sinner always has the look of a jaded and disappointed man. There is weariness

in the very light of his eyes, vexation in the very sound of his voice. Why is he so cross with others, if he is so happy with himself? Then are there not also dreadful times, private times when none but God sees him, when he is chilled through and through with fear, when he is weary of life because he is so miserable, when the past weighs upon him like a nightmare, and the future terrifies him like a coming wild beast? When death springs upon him how will he die? When judgment comes what will he answer? Yet even if the sinner could go through life with the gay indifference which he pretends, he is not to be envied. It is only a sleep, a lethargy, or a madness, —one or other of these according to his natural disposition. For there must be an awakening at last; and when and where will it be? They that walk in their sleep are sometimes wakened if they put their foot into cold water. What if the sinner's awakening should be from the first touch of the fire that burns beyond the grave?

Salvation is through the Precious Blood. We will take that for our study of Jesus this time. We are to consider then, first of all, the mystery of the Precious Blood. It was one of God's eternal thoughts. It was part of His wisdom, part of His glory, part of His own blessedness from all eternity. To be eternal is to be without beginning; and to be without beginning is to be independent of any cause or power. This is a true description of God. But creation had a time at which it began, and it was the independent act of God's most holy, most condescending will. Nevertheless there is a sense in which creation was eternal. It was eternally in the mind of God. It was one of

His eternal ideas, always before Him; so that He never existed without this idea of creation in His all-wise mind and in His all-powerful intention. But the sight of sin was also with God from the beginning, that is through all His unbeginning eternity; and thus the Precious Blood also, as the ransom for sin, was with Him from the beginning. It was one of His eternal thoughts. If we may dare to say so, it was an idea which made Him more glorious, a thought which rendered him more blessed. That same dear Blood, the thought of which makes us so happy now, has been part of God's happiness forever.

He created the angels and the stars. How ancient the angels are we do not know. In all their ways they are wonderful to think of, because they are so strong, so wise, so various, so beautiful, so innumerable. But they do not lie in our way just now, because they were not redeemed by the Precious Blood. Those angels who did not fall, did not sin, and so needed no redemption; and God would not allow those who fell to be redeemed at all. This makes us sometimes think that God was more severe with His world of angels than with His world of men. But this is not really the case. It only shows us how we owe more to Jesus than we often think of. The angels could not make any satisfaction to the justice of God for their sins. If all the angels, good and bad together, had suffered willingly the most excruciating torments for millions upon millions of ages, those willing torments could not have made up to God, for the sin of the least sinful of those angels who are now devils. If our dearest Saviour had taken upon Himself the nature of angels, the case would have

been different. But He became man, not angel, and so His Passion, as man, satisfied for all possible sins of men. The sufferings of His Passion were greater and of more price than all the torments of countless angels. The severity of God exacted more from Him upon the Cross, than it ever exacted or is exacting now, from the angels. Thus you see God has not been more severe with them than with us; only that Jesus made Himself one of us and took all our share of God's severity upon Himself, leaving us the easy happiness of faith and hope and love. You see we come upon the kindness of Jesus everywhere. There is not even a difficulty in religion but somehow the greatness of His love is at the bottom of it and is the explanation of it. How sweet it is to be so hemmed in by the tokens of His love, that we can not turn to any side without meeting them! Yet His love would be sweeter to us if we could only repay it with more love ourselves.

God made the stars, and whether the earth was made by itself from the first, or was once part of the sun, and thrown off from it like a ring, God made the earth also, and shaped it and adorned it, and filled it with trees and animals; and then looked upon His own work, and it shone so beautifully with the light of His own perfections, that He blessed it, and glorying in it declared that it was very good. We know what an intense pleasure men take in looking at beautiful scenery. When we feel this pleasure we ought to feel that we are looking at a little revelation of God, a very true one, although a little one, and we ought to think of God's complacency when He beheld the scenery of the primeval earth, and rejoiced in what he saw. There was no sin then. To God's

eye earth was all the more beautiful because it was innocent, and the dwelling-place of innocence. Then sin came. Why God let it come we do not know. We shall probably know in heaven. We are certain, however, that in some way or other it was more glorious for Him, and better for us that evil should be permitted. Some people trouble themselves about this. It does not trouble me at all. Whatever God does must of course be right. My understanding it would not make it more right; neither could I do any thing to mend matters if I understood it ever so well. Every one should keep in his own place; it is the creature's place to believe, adore, and love.

Sin came. With sin came many fearful consequences. This beautiful earth was completely wrecked. It went on through space in the sunshine as before; but in God's sight, and in the destiny of its inhabitants all was changed. Had it not been for Jesus, the case of earth would have been hopeless now that sin had come. God would have let it go, as He let the angels go. It would have been all hateful and dark in His sight, as the home of the fallen spirits is. But it was not so. Earth was dimmed, but it was not darkened, disfigured, but not blackened. God saw it through the Precious Blood as through a haze; and there it lay with a dusky glory over it, like a red sunset, up to the day of Christ. No sooner had man sinned, than the influence of the Precious Blood began to be felt. There was no adorable abruptness on the part of God, as with the angels. His very upbraiding of Adam was full of paternal gentleness. With His punishment He mingled promises. As the poor offending earth

lay then before the sight of God, so does it lie now; only that the haze is more resplendent since the Sacrifice on Calvary was offered. The Precious Blood covers it all over like a sea or like an atmosphere. It lies in a beautiful crimson light forever, a light softening the very shades, beautifying the very gloom. God does not see us as we see ourselves, but in a brighter, softer light. We are fairer in His sight than we are in our own notwithstanding His exceeding sanctity, because He sees us in the Blood of His dear Son. This is a consolation the balm of which is not easily exhausted. We learn a lesson from it also. Our view of creation should be like God's view. We should see it with all its countless souls through the illuminated mist of the Precious Blood.

This is the shape then which our Father's love takes to us His creatures. It is an invitation of us all to the freedom of the Precious Blood. It is in this Blood that He has laid up His blessings for us as in a store-house. This is true not only of spiritual blessings, but of all blessings whatsoever. That the elements still wait upon us sinners, that things around us are so bright and beautiful, that pain has so many balms, that sorrow has so many alleviations, that the common course of daily providence is so kindly and so patient, that the weight, the frequency, and the bitterness of evils are so much lightened, is all owing to the Precious Blood. It is by this Blood that He has created over again His frustrated creation. It is this Blood which merits all good things for every one. There is not a corner of God's creation which is not more or less under the benignant control of the Precious Blood.

Nevertheless the Precious Blood belongs in an especial manner to men. Much more therefore does God invite them to come to its cleansing baths, and receive therein not only the cleansing of their souls, but also the power of a new and amazing life. Every doctrine in theology is a call to the Precious Blood. Every ceremony in the Church tells of it. Every sermon that is preached is an exhortation to the use of it. Every thing that is holy on the earth, is either leaf, bud, blossom, or fruit of the Blood of Jesus. To its fountains God calls the sinner that he may be lightened of his burdens. There is no remission for him in any thing else. Only there is his lost sonship to be found. But the saints are no less called to these invigorating streams. The secret nourishment of prayer is from those fountains. They purge the eye for sublime contemplations. They kindle the inward fires of self-sacrificing love. They bear a man safely and even impetuously over the seeming impossibilities of perseverance. All the new nature of the man who is "renewed in Christ Jesus," comes from this Blood, whether it be his love of suffering, his delight in shame, his grace of prayer, his unworldly tastes, his strange humility, his shy concealment, his zeal for souls, his venturesome audacity or his obstinate perseverance. Sinner, saint, and common Christian, all in their own ways require the Precious Blood each moment of their lives; and as the manna in the mouths of the Israelites had the savor which each man wished it to have, so is it with the sweetness, the variety, and the fitness of the graces of the Precious Blood.

There is no narrowness in divine things. There is

no narrowness in the Precious Blood. It is a divine invention which partakes of the universality and immensity of God. The tribes that inhabit the different lands of the earth are distinguished by different characteristics. One nation differs so much from another, as to be often unable to judge of the moral character of the other's actions. What for instance would be pride in the inhabitant of one country, would only be patriotism in the inhabitant of another, or what would be falsehood in one country is only the characteristic way of putting things in another. It is not that the immutable principles of morality can be changed by national character or by climate; but that outward actions signify such different inward habits in various countries, that a foreigner is no judge of them. Thus a foreign history of any people is for the most part little better than a hypothesis, and is not unfrequently a misapprehension from first to last. But the Precious Blood is meant for all nations. As all stand in equal need of it, so all find it just what they want. It is to each people the grace which shall correct that particular form of human corruption which is prominent in their natural character. The Oriental and the Western must both come to its healing streams, and in it all national distinctions are done away. In that laver of Salvation there is neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free; all are one in the redeeming Blood of Jesus.

As it is with the countries of the world, so is it with the ages of the world. Each age has its own distinctive spirit. It has its own proper virtues, and its own proper vices. It has its own sciences, inven-

tions, literature, policy, and development. Each age thinks itself peculiar, which it is; and imagines it is better than other ages, which it is not. It is probably neither better nor worse. In substantial matters the ages are pretty much on a level with each other. But each has its own way, and requires to be dealt with in that way. This is the reason why the Church seems to act differently in different ages. There is a sense in which the Church goes along with the world. It is the same sense in which the shepherd leaves the sheep which have not strayed, and goes off in search of the one that has strayed. Each age is a stray sheep from God; and the Church has to seek it and fetch it back to Him so far as it is allowed to do so. We must not make light of the differences of the ages. Each age needs persuading in a manner of its own. It finds its own difficulties in religion. It has its own peculiar temptations and follies. God's work is never done in any one age. It has to be begun again in every age. Old controversies become useless, because they cease to be convincing. Old methods are found unsuitable because things have changed. It is on this account that theology puts on new aspects, that devotion has fashions and vicissitudes, that art and ritual undergo changes, that discipline is modified, and that the Church puts herself in different relations to the governments of the world. But the Precious Blood adapts itself with changeful uniformity to every age. It is always old and always new. It is the one salvation. It is coextensive with civilization. No science innovates upon it. The world never exhausts its abundance or outgrows its necessity.

CHAPTER II.

THE NECESSITY OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD.

What would the world be without Jesus? We may perhaps sometimes have made pictures to ourselves of the day of judgment. We may have imagined the storms above, and the earthquakes underneath, the sun and the moon darkened, and the stars falling from heaven, the fire raging over the face of the earth, men crying to the mountains and rocks to fall upon them and hide them, and in the masses of the eastern clouds Jesus coming to judge the world. We think it appropriate to add to the picture every feature of physical tumult and desolation, every wildest unchaining of the elements, although doubtless the catastrophe of that day of horrors will follow the grand uniformity of a natural law even amid the impetuosity of its convulsions. Yet the misery and confusion of earth at that day will have less of real horror in it than the earth without Jesus would have, even though the sun were shining, and the flowers blooming, and the birds singing. An earth without hope or happiness, without love or peace, the past a burden, the present a weariness, the future a shapeless terror,—such would the earth be, if by impossibility

there were no Jesus. Indeed it is only in such a general way that we can conceive what the world would be without Him. We can make no picture to ourselves of the real horror. His Five Wounds are forever pleading at the Right Hand of the Father. They are holding back the divine indignation. They are satisfying the divine justice. They are moving the divine compassion. Even temporal blessings come from them. They are bridling the earthquake and the storm, the pestilence and the famine, and a thousand other temporal consequences of sin, which we do not know of, or so much as suspect. Besides this, Jesus is bound up with our innermost lives. He is more to us than the blood in our veins. We know that He is indispensable to us, but we do not dream how indispensable He is.

But surely we have said enough to prove the necessity of Jesus. Let us look at the world without His Precious Blood. In the early ages of the earth, while the primitive conditions of Eden were still fresh and strong, and when God was from time to time manifesting Himself in supernatural ways, the world drifted so rapidly from God that its sins began to assume a colossal magnitude. There was a complete confusion of all moral laws and duties. Scripture represents to us very forcibly by a human expression the terrific nature of their iniquity. It says that the Eternal repented of having done what he had eternally decreed to do, repented of having made man. At length the divine justice opened the flood-gates of heaven, and destroyed all the dwellers upon earth, except eight persons; as if the issue of evil could not otherwise be staunch. This is a divine manifesta-

tion to us of the nature and character of evil. It multiplies itself. It tends to be gigantic, and to get from under control. It is always growing toward an open rebellion against the majesty of God. Everywhere on the earth the Precious Blood is warring down this evil in detail. Here it is obliterating it, here it is cutting off its past growths, or making its future growth slower or of less dimensions. There it is diluting it with grace, or rendering it sterile, or wounding and weakening it, or rendering it cowardly and cautious. Upon all exhibitions of evil the action of the Precious Blood is incessant. At no time and in no place is it altogether inoperative. Let us see what the world would be like if the Precious Blood withdrew from this ceaseless war with evil.

It is plain that some millions of sins in a day are hindered by the Precious Blood ; and this is not merely a hindering of so many individual sins, but it is an immense check upon the momentum of sin. It is also a weakening of habits of sin, and a diminution of the consequences of sin. If then the action of the Precious Blood were withdrawn from the world, sins would not only increase incalculably in number, but the tyranny of sin would be fearfully augmented, and it would spread among a greater number of people. It would wax so bold that no one would be secure from the sins of others. It would be a constant warfare or an intolerable vigilance to preserve property and rights. Falsehood would become so universal as almost to dissolve society ; and the homes of domestic life would be turned into the wards either of a prison or a madhouse. We can not be in the company of an atrocious criminal without some feeling of uneasi-

ness and fear. We should not like to be left alone with him, even if his chains were not unfastened. But without the Precious Blood such men would abound in the world. They might even become the majority. We know of ourselves from glimpses God has once or twice given us in life, what incredible possibilities of wickedness we have in our souls. Civilization increases these possibilities. Education multiplies and magnifies our powers of sinning. Refinement adds a fresh malignity. Men would thus become more and more diabolically and unmixedly bad, until at last earth would be a hell on this side of the grave. There would also doubtless be new kinds of sin and worse kinds. Education would provide the novelty, and refinement would carry it into the region of the unnatural. All highly refined and luxurious developments of heathenism have fearfully illustrated this truth. A wild barbarian is like a beast. His savage passions are violent but intermittent, and his necessities of sin do not appear to grow. Their circle is limited. But a highly-educated sinner, without the restraints of religion, is like a demon. His sins are less confined to himself. They involve others in their misery. They require others to be offered as it were in sacrifice to them. Moreover education, considered simply as an intellectual cultivation, propagates sin, and makes it more universal.

The increase of sin, without the prospects which the faith lays open to us, must lead to an increase of despair, and that on a gigantic scale. With despair must come rage, madness, violence, tumult and bloodshed. Yet from what quarter could we expect

relief in this tremendous suffering? We should be imprisoned in our own planet. The blue sky above us would be but a dungeon roof. The green sward beneath our feet would truly be the slab of our future tomb. Without the Precious Blood there is no intercourse between heaven and earth. Prayer would be useless. Our hapless lot would be irremediable. In this imaginary world of rampant sin there would be no motive for patience. For death would be our only seeming relief; and that is only seeming, for death is any thing but an eternal sleep. Our impatience would become frenzy; and if our constitutions were strong enough to prevent the frenzy from issuing in downright madness, it would grow into hatred of God, which is perhaps already less common than we suppose.

An earth from which all sense of justice had perished, would indeed be the most disconsolate of homes. Whatever relics of moral good we might retain about us would add most sensibly to our misery. Good people, if there were any, would be as St. Paul speaks, of all men the most miserable: for they would be drawn away from the enjoyment of this world by a sense of guilt and shame, and there would be no other world to aim at or to work for.

But how would it fare with the poor in such a world? They are God's chosen portion upon earth. He chose poverty Himself, when He came to us. He has left the poor in His place, and they are never to fail from the earth, but to be His representatives there until the doom? But if it were not for the Precious Blood, would any one love them? Would any one have a devotion to them, and dedicate his

life to merciful ingenuities to alleviate their lot? If the stream of almsgiving is so insufficient now, what would it be then? There would be no softening of the heart by grace; there would be no admission of the obligation to give away in alms a definite portion of our incomes. The Gospel makes men's hearts large; and yet even under the Gospel the fountain of almsgiving flows scantily and uncertainly. But all this is only negative, only an absence of God. Matters would go much further in such a world as we are imagining. Even in countries professing to be Christian, and at least in possession of the knowledge of the Gospel, the poor grow to be an intolerable burden upon the rich. They have to be supported by compulsory taxes; and they are in other ways a continual subject of irritated and impatient legislation. Nevertheless, it is due to the Precious Blood that the principle of supporting them is acknowledged. From what we read in heathen history—even the history of nations renowned for political wisdom, for philosophical speculation, and for literary and artistic refinement—it would not be extravagant for us to conclude that, if the circumstances of a country were such as to make the numbers of the poor dangerous to the rich, the rich would not scruple to destroy them, while it was yet in their power to do so. Just as men have had in France and England to war down beasts and wolves, so would the rich war down the poor, whose clamorous misery and excited despair should threaten them in the enjoyment of their power and their possessions. The numbers of the poor would be thinned by murder, until it should be safe for their masters to reduce them into slavery. The survivors

would lead the lives of convicts or of beasts. History, I repeat, shows us that this is not an unwarrantable supposition.

Such would be the condition of the world without the Precious Blood. As generations succeeded each other, original sin would go on developing those inexhaustible malignant powers which come from the almost infinite character of evil. Sin would work earth into hell. Men would become devils, devils to others and to themselves. Every thing which makes life tolerable, which counteracts any evil, which softens any harshness, which sweetens any bitterness, which causes the machinery of society to work smoothly, or which consoles any sadness,—is simply due to the Precious Blood of Jesus, in heathen as well as Christian lands. It changes the whole position of an offending creation to its Creator. It does not work merely in a spiritual sphere. We are all of us every moment sensibly enjoying the benignant influence of the Precious Blood. Yet who thinks of all this? Why is the goodness of God so hidden, so imperceptible, so unsuspected? Perhaps because it is so universal and excessive that we could hardly be free agents if it pressed sensibly upon us always. God's goodness is at once the most public of all His attributes, and at the same time the most secret. Has life a sweeter task than to seek it, and to find it out?

Men would be far more happy if they separated religion less violently from other things. It is both unwise and unloving to put religion into a place by itself, and mark it off with an untrue distinctness from what we call worldly and unspiritual things.

Of course there is a distinction and a most important one between them ; yet it is easy to make this distinction too rigid, and to carry it too far. Thus we often attribute to nature what is only due to grace, and we put out of sight the manner and the degree in which the blessed mystery of the Incarnation affects all created things. Hence it comes to pass that men make too much of natural goodness. They think too highly of human progress. They exaggerate the moralizing powers of civilization and refinement, which, apart from grace, are simply tyrannies of the few over the many, or of the public over the individual soul. Meanwhile they underrate the corrupting capabilities of sin, and attribute to unassisted nature many excellences which it only catches, as it were by infection from the proximity of grace, or by contagion from the touch of the Church. They admit the superior excellence of Christian charity ; but they also think highly of natural philanthropy. But has this philanthropy ever been found where the indirect influences of the true religion whether Jewish or Christian had not penetrated ? We may admire the Greeks for their exquisite refinement, and the Romans for the wisdom of their political moderation. Yet look at the position of children, of servants, of slaves, and of the poor, under both those systems, and see if while extreme refinement only pushed sin to an extremity of foulness, the same exquisite culture did not also lead to a social cruelty and an individual selfishness which made life unbearable to the masses. Philanthropy is but a theft from the Gospel, or rather a shadow, and as unhelpful as shadows are wont to be. Nevertheless let us take this philanthropy at its word, and see

what the world would be like, with philanthropy instead of the Precious Blood.

We will take the world as it is with its present evils. What amount of alleviation can philanthropy bring, supposing there could be such a thing without the example and atmosphere of the Gospel? In the first place what could it do for poverty? It would be dismayed by the number of the poor and appalled by the variety and exigency of their needs. All manner of intractable questions would rise up, for the solving of which its philosophy could furnish it with no simple principles. Men would have their own work to do, and their own business to attend to. It is not conceivable that mere philanthropy should make the administration of alms, and the ministering to the poor, a separate profession; and self-devotion upon any large scale is not to be thought of except as a corollary of the doctrine of the Cross. Thus while the alms to be distributed would necessarily be limited, and the claims almost illimitable, there would be no means of proportioning relief. Unseen poverty is for the most part a worthier thing than the poverty which is seen: but who would with patient kindness and instinctive delicacy track shamefaced poverty to its obscure retirements. The loudest beggars would get most, the modest least. The highest virtue aimed at in the distribution of alms, and it is truly a high one, would be justice. Thus it would come to pass that those who by sin or folly had brought poverty upon themselves would obtain no relief at all; and so charity would cease to have any power to raise men above their past lives, or elevate them in the scale of moral worth. Philanthropy must have a sphere, a

round, a beat. It must of necessity have in it somewhat of the political economist, and somewhat of the policeman. It must never allow individual sympathies to draw off its attention to the public welfare. Sudden misfortunes, a bad harvest, a commercial crisis, a sickly winter,—these things would sadly interfere with the calculations of philanthropy. If the amount of self-sacrifice is so small, when we have the example of our Lord, and the actual obligation under pain of sin to set aside a portion of our incomes for the poor, what would it be if all these motives were withdrawn?

Let us consider bodily pain, and the agency of philanthropy in alleviating it. An immense amount of the world's misery consists in bodily pain. There are few things more hard to bear. It is one of our unrealities that we write and speak lightly of it. We think it grand to do so. We think to show our manliness. But the truth is there are few men who could not bear a breaking heart better than an aching limb. There are many points of view from which bodily pain is less easy to bear than mental anguish. But what can philanthropy do for bodily pain? Every one whose lot it is to lead a life of pain knows too well how little medical science avails to alleviate this particular kind of human suffering. It may do much in the way of prevention. Who knows? For the pain we might have had, but have not had, is an unknown region. Let us give medical science the benefit of our ignorance. Yet what could philanthropy do for bodily pain except surround it with medical appliances and with physical comforts? Let us not underrate the consolation of the large-minded wisdom,

the benevolent common sense, and the peculiar priestly kindness of an intelligent physician. It is very great. Neither let us pretend to make light of the alleviations of an airy room, of a soft bed, of well-prepared food, of a low voice and a noiseless step, and of those attentions which are beforehand with our irritability by divining our wants at the right moment. Nevertheless, when the daily pressure of bodily pain goes on for weeks and months, when all life which is not illness is but a vacillating convalescence, what adequate or abiding consolation can we find except in supernatural things, in the motives of the faith, in union with Jesus, in that secret experimental knowledge of God, which makes us at times find chastisement so sweet?

It is the characteristic of mental suffering to be for the most part beyond the reach of philanthropy. Every heart knows its own bitterness. That part of a mental sorrow which can be expressed, is generally the part which rankles least. The suffering of it depends mainly on feelings which belong to individual character, feelings which can hardly be stated, and which if stated could not be appreciated, even if they were not altogether misunderstood. Who has not often wondered at the almost invariable irritation produced in unhappy persons by set and formal soothing? Job is not the only person who has been more provoked by his comforters than his miseries. Even the daily wear and tear of our hearts in common life can not be reached by outward consolation, unless that consolation comes from above and is divine. Philanthropy, with the best intentions, can never get inside the heart. There are sufferings

there too deep for any thing but religion either to reach or to appreciate; and such sufferings are neither exceptional nor uncommon. There are few men who have not more than one of them. If we take away the great sorrow upon Calvary, how dark and how unbearable a mystery does all sorrow become! Kindness is sweet, even to the sorrowing, because of its intentions. It is not valuable because of its efficacy, except when it is the graceful minister of the Precious Blood.

I reckon failure to be the most universal unhappiness on earth. Almost every body and every thing are failures,—failures in their own estimation, even if they are not so in the estimation of others. Those optimists who always think themselves successful are few in number, and they for the most part fail in this at least, namely, that they can not persuade the rest of the world of their success. Philanthropy can plainly do nothing here even if it were inclined to try. But philanthropy is a branch of moral philosophy, and would turn away in disdain from an unhappiness which it could prove to be unreasonable, even while it acknowledged it to be universal. It is simply true that few men are successful, and of those few it is rare to find any who are satisfied with their own success. The multitude of men live with a vexatious sense that the promise of their lives remains unfulfilled. What must all life be but a feverish disappointment if there be no eternity in view? The religious man is the only successful man. Nothing fails with him. Every shaft reaches the mark, if the mark be God. He has wasted no energies. Every hope has been fulfilled beyond his expectations. Every effort has been even

disproportionately rewarded. Every means has turned out marvellously to be an end because it has God in it who is our single end. In piety every battle is a victory, simply because it is a battle. The completest defeats have somewhat of triumph in them, for it is a positive triumph to have stood up and fought for God at all. In short, no life is a failure which is lived for God, and all lives are failures which are lived for any other end. If it is part of any man's disposition to be peculiarly and morbidly sensitive to failure, he must regard it as an additional motive to be religious. Piety is the only invariable, satisfactory, genuine success.

If philanthropy turns out to be so unhelpful a thing in the difficulties of life, will it be more helpful at the bed of death? Death is the failure of nature. There is no help then except in the supernatural. The sense of guilt, the uneasiness in darkness, the shrinking from the unknown, the shapeless shadows of an unexplored world, the new panic of the soul, the sensible momentary falling off into an abyss, the inevitable helplessness, the frightening transition from a state of change to one of endless fixedness,—how is philanthropy to meet such difficulties as these? Truly in the atmosphere of death, all lights go out except the lamp of faith. Were it not for Jesus, the dark hour would be darkened with an Egyptian darkness. It has something of the glory of a sunset round it now, and the glory is the refulgence of the Saviour's Blood.

But in this world, manner is often a more substantial thing than matter. Now let us picture to ourselves an imaginary philanthropic city. Its palaces

shall be hospitals, hospitals for every form of disease which is known to medical science. Its business shall not be politics, but the administration of benevolent societies. Its rich population shall divide and subdivide itself into endless committees, each of which shall make some human misery its specialty. Its intellect shall be occupied in devising schemes of philanthropy, in inventing new methods, or fresh organizations, and in bringing to perfection the police, the order, the comfort, the accommodation, the pliability of existing beneficent institutions. The strangest successes shall be attained with the blind, the deaf and dumb, and the insane. Moreover, in this city, which the world has never seen, the philanthropy shall be the most genial and good-humored of all the philanthropies which the world has had the good fortune to see. Yet who that has ever seen the most estimable, easy-going, and conscientious board of poor-law guardians can doubt but that, on the whole, considerable dryness, stiffness, theoretical pugnacity, benevolent pertinaciousness, vexatious generalizations, and irritable surprise at the unmanageable prejudiced poor, would characterize this philanthropic city? Misery can not be relieved on rules of distributive justice. Masses will not organize themselves under theories. Hearts will not attain happiness through clear convictions that they ought to be happy. Individual misery has an inveterate habit of dictating its own consolations. The most open-hearted benefactors would be met by suspicion. A needy man can outwit most committees. Machinery for men soon gets choked up by multitudes, and for the most part blows up and maims its excellent

inventors. There are few who can handle a large army; yet that is easy work compared to the question of the management of the poor. Moreover, when the best men have done their best, there always remains that instinct in the poor, which makes them see only enemies in the rich; and that instinct is too strong for the collective wisdom of all the philanthropists in the world.

I am far from saying that Christian charity is perfect. Everywhere the breadth and activity of human misery are baffling and outrunning the speed and generosity of charity. Out of the love of Jesus comes the love of souls; and it is just the love of souls which effects that most marvellous of all Christian transformations, the change of philanthropy into charity. Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the side of Jacob's well, or with the Magdalen in the pharisee's house, inspires a spirit totally different from that which animates the most benevolent philosopher. It is a spirit of supernatural love, a spirit of imitation of Jesus, a spirit of gentle eagerness and affectionate sacrifice, which gives to the exercise of charity a winning sweetness and a nameless charm which are entirely its own. The love of individual souls is purely a Christian thing. No language can describe it to those who do not feel it. If men see it, and do not sympathize with it, they so mistake it that they call it proselytism. They attribute to the basest motives that which comes precisely from the very highest. Indeed, from a political or philosophical point of view, those things which are the most Christ-like in charity are the very things which men condemn as mischievous, if not immoral. In their view harm is

done by treating men as individuals, not as masses. Alms are squandered. Unworthy objects get them. The misery which punishes vice is an object of love, as well as that which comes of innocent misfortune. Charity cares too little about being deceived, it is too impulsive, too irregular, too enthusiastic. Evidently, then, the manners and gestures of charity in action are wholly different from those of philanthropy in action. The one succeeds with men and the other does not, and the success of charity is owing to the spirit which it imbibes from the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ.

Here are many words to prove a simple thing, and a thing which needed no proving. But it brings home to us more forcibly and more in detail the necessity of the Precious Blood. But after all, the grand necessity of it is the necessity of having our sins forgiven, the necessity of loving above all created things our most dear God and Father. Let us think for a moment. The depth of summer silence is all around. Those tall chestnuts stand up, muffled down to the feet with their heavy mantles of dark foliage, of which not a leaf is stirring. There is no sound of water, no song of bird, no rustling of any creature in the grass. Those banks of white cloud have no perceptible movement. The silence has only been broken for a moment, when the clock struck from the hidden church in the elm-girdled field, and the sound was so softened and stifled with leaves, that it seemed almost like some cry natural to the woodland. We do not close our eyes. Yet the quiet of the scene has carried us beyond itself. What are time and earth, beauty and peace to us? What is

any thing to us if our sins be not forgiven? Is not that our one want? Time, so quiet and stationary is this summer noontide, makes us think of eternity, and gives us a shadowy idea of it. But the thought of eternity is not to be faced if our sins be not forgiven.

We think of the sorrows and the joys of a soul, of the beautiful significance of its life, of its manifold loveliness and generosity, and of all the good that glittered like broken crystals amidst its evil. How many persons loved it? How many lives of others it sweetened and brightened? How attractive often in its good-humored carelessness about its duty? It has gone into darkness. It is a ruin, a wreck, a failure, an eternal misery. Sin! What is sin that it should do all this? Why was there any sin? Why is sin, sin at all? We turn to the majesty of God to learn. Instinctively we lift our eyes to the noonday sun, and it only blinds us. Sin is sin, because God is God. There is no getting any farther in that direction. That soul, some soul is lost. But our own soul! That soul which is ourself. Can we by any amount of violence think of *it* as lost? No, our own perdition is absolutely unthinkable. Hope disables us from thinking it. But we know that it is possible. We sometimes feel the possible verging into the probable. We know how it can be lost, and perceive actual dangers. We know how alone it can avoid being lost; and in that direction matters do not look satisfactory. But it must not be lost; it shall not be lost; it can not be lost. See then the tremendous necessity of the Precious Blood.

CHAPTER III.

THE PRODIGALITY OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD.

There has been some variety in the enumeration of the Seven Blood-sheddings by different holy persons, though the difference has been little more than one of division. The Seven are the Circumcision, the Agony, the Scourging, the Crowning with Thorns, the Way of the Cross, the Crucifixion and the Piercing of the Sacred Heart. There is no doubt a divine intention in these particular seven mysteries. While they are like each other they are also different. In the number of times that the Blood was shed, and in the mysterious manner of its shedding it is the magnificence of God which is revealing the excesses of His love. The whole seven together have also a distinctive unity, and form a complete picture and a definite spirit in our souls.

The first Blood-shedding was the Circumcision. To the Heart of Jesus, already enamored of sorrow and suffering, seven days were enough for the tranquil joys of Bethlehem, joys over whose tranquillity the shadow of Calvary was already cast. Could He not rest awhile? Need He begin redeeming all at once? No, He can not rest. He could not rest in His Father's Bosom. He can not rest in His Mother's arms

His rest is in the shedding of His Blood. Let the Child shed His Blood, and then He will be content to rest; and so He shed it in the Circumcision being yet but eight days old. Strange thought, but there were seven days, during which our Blessed Lord was nameless. How did Joseph name Him? if indeed in the fulness of His joy, that peaceful saint needed to speak at all. Now with the Blood comes the sweet Name of Jesus, as if He had no right to it until He shed His Blood. But of what use were those first drops of that Precious Blood? For us it is enough to see in this dear impatience if we may thus dare to speak, most touching revelations of our Saviour's love. The days of type and figure had not yet gone by; and He gave us this mystery as a type and figure of His future life and work. He taught us doctrine by it also, the doctrine that, now that man had fallen, He had only assumed His Blood in order that He might shed it. It was so completely for us, that it was more ours than His. All things turn to love, all things turn to our profit, when they belong to Jesus.

Long years have passed since that New Year's Day of the guiltless Babe of Bethlehem; and now another scene opens to our view. It is the Agony in the Garden. Jesus kneels there. He is now a grown-up man. Three and thirty years have passed over Him. They have been the longest, because the fullest years that earth has ever known. His weary ministry of three years has drawn to its close. He has been often weary. He was weary when He sat by Jacob's well and asked the Samaritan woman for an alms of the fresh cold water which He Himself had created. He

has been weary on the mountain sides, when He prayed instead of sleeping, while the moon shone tremulously on the limestone rocks, as if it hardly dared to light up the furtive figure of its Creator keeping watch among the crags. But His love of souls has never yet been tired. His weariness has never reached the yearnings of His Sacred Heart. This Thursday night amidst the olives we find Him still unchanged. To-morrow men will crucify His blessed body and pour out His Blood like water. But to-morrow is not soon enough. To-night His adorable soul, that King among creatures, that royallest of all the works of God, will itself crucify His Body. He will suffer a martyrdom to-night even more mysterious than that martyrdom on Calvary. See now what that Soul is doing. It gathers round it all the sins of men, manifold, multitudinous, ponderous. Never on earth was there such mortal heaviness, such aching sadness, such a drying up of life's fountains, such a tormenting languor, such an exceeding sickening of soul. Then it lifts up its hands that mighty Soul, as if with more than Samson's strength it were about to pull down the big heavens upon itself; and it draws down upon itself the huge storm of God's eternal Justice, and overwhelming wrath, and then lies crushed beneath it, a plaintive Human Life almost extinguished, and only not extinguished because it is a Divine Life as well. Such Manhood! Such Godhead! Who is equal to so terrible a mystery? Ah, Jesus! how dreadful is this solitude which is even deepened by the presence of that one trembling angel whom thy cries have drawn from heaven! The Sacred Heart can bear no more. Drop by drop,

unnaturally, through the burning pores of the skin, the beads of the Blood ooze out. They stand upon His brow, and then roll down His face. They suffuse every limb as in a universal Sweat of Blood.

Who can tell the mysteries of this Second Blood-shedding? Yet here again we have the same feature of prodigality. This Blood shed itself through desire of redeeming the world; yet it did not itself redeem it, because it was not the Blood of His death. It was His own act, not the appointed sacrificial act of others. But what a vast significance of love there was in this miraculous portent of the Bloody Sweat! He was straitened, it was His own word, with eagerness for His Passion.

The sun in the heavens and the shadows in the streets mark it to be about nine of the morning in Jerusalem. It is the hour of the third Blood-shedding, the Scourging. This is the most intolerable of all the mysteries of our Blessed Saviour's Passion. It is the one which is the hardest to contemplate in the quietness of prayer. There is something revolting in the anguish of sheer bodily pain. There is something degrading in the intentional infliction of shame. Yet these two horrors are combined in the mystery of the Scourging. It is an intolerable mystery; yet if we love Him we must endure it. We must not be fastidious. He was not. We sent Him to this. It was suffered for us. We must not turn away. It is an intolerable mystery; but it has a sweet gift. There is no mystery of the Passion which so uncovers His Divinity to us. It is almost like a vision of the Godhead. There is no mystery which fills our souls so full of so deep an adoration.

But in this third Blood-shedding there is the same character of Prodigality. It was shed in an excess of pain and an excess of shame, and it was shed in an excess of copiousness. It was as if it foresaw how on the Cross it would have but five local vents, five wells distilling salvation for the world, and it could not bear to be thus restricted. So now it presents the whole surface of the Body, that it may be able to gush forth in unrestrained abundance. It was simply one of the mysterious magnificences of the Precious Blood. Our blessed Lord Himself appeared in strange symbolical guise in this third Blood-shedding. In the Agony He had been seen by the Father clad in all the darkness of human sin. No human eye saw Him in the shadowy moonlight, nor could have discerned His fearful transfiguration even if it could have seen Him. But now He was an open symbol to the city and the people. He was bathed in His own Blood. He was clad in a living robe of royal purple. He, the Redeemer, put on the image of the redeemed. As He was in His shame and misery, so shall we be in our glory and our joy, all beautified with Blood, that self-same Blood wherewith they clothed Him when they had stripped Him of His garments.

But now the Precious Blood has swiftly formed a habit of being shed; and who shall stay it? It was with no bitterness, but with truthfulest love, that Jesus named that Friday the Day of His Espousals. But we read that His Jewish mother crowned Him with a diadem in the day of His espousals. Whose heart does not leap up at the thought of such a mystery—the Coronation of the Creator by His creatures?

Crowned as is each man's life with a beautiful coronal wreathed for Him by divine love out of all God's perfections, what grateful crown shall they set upon His Head who has set them free by reigning over them as King? Alas! it is another Blood-shedding, the fourth Blood-shedding, the Crowning of Thorns. It is His dear dominion which is distasteful to their hearts. They can not bear that He should call Himself a King. They would fain deride His Kingship, but they feel and fear it all the while. If He had never been a King before, had He not become one now through the very royalty of His gentleness, under the ignominies of the past night, and the outrages of that morning? So in the blindness of their malice they wrought a divine mystery. They crowned Him King. The oppressed are given to be oppressors, and the violent to be brutal. If there be no other use of the Eternal God for Roman soldiers, at least He shall relieve the tedium of a Syrian guard-room. They have trouble enough with these Jewish criminals, they shall have sport out of them also. Sun and rain had come alternately on the green briars, which the unsuspecting earth had grown for the Creator. They had tangled themselves with many a juicy shoot. They had grown up into matted bushes, and the sun of autumn had hardened their soft spikes into strong tough barbs. Perhaps the honey-bees had come to these flowers to extract sweetness, and the restless butterflies had been attracted for a moment by their aromatic fragrance, or the birds had rifled their golden berries with their beaks. But who would have dreamed that they were yet to be gilded with the Blood of their Creator? Protecting their hard-skinned hands with their leath-

ern gauntlets, the soldiers weave a crown of these sharp and obstinate thorns. Jesus is sitting on a bench. We hardly dare to look at Him, He is so Godlike in His abjection. How love constrains our hearts to worship, and then how worship encourages our hearts to love! They come nigh to the Eternal. They thrust the crown upon His Head with rude vehemence. It is not round. It will not fit. They force the spikes into the skin and the Blood comes slowly and with pain.

In this fourth Blood-shedding there was not much Blood. Yet it was not without its note of prodigality. If it was little, it was very precious, for it was the Blood of His Head. It was the Blood which had just been feeding His brain, the Blood by the help of which He had been thinking unutterable thoughts. Each of those thoughts had been broader and deeper than an angel's service. They had been sweeter and gentler than a mother's love. They had all been tintured with that passionate love of souls which was the spirit of the Precious Blood.

The Fifth Blood-shedding is the Way of the Cross, a veritable procession of the Precious Blood. Slowly winding and unwinding itself out of the streets of Salem, up the ascent of Calvary, it had not far to go, but it was long in slowness, long in suffering, long in the manifold mysteries which were densely compressed within it. Every wound was bleeding. The drops from the Crown trickled slowly down, or gathered upon the Face of Jesus. The hundred fontinels of the Scourging oozed out into His garments, as the wet rocks on the mountains ooze through their robes of moss. The wounds of the night's arrest, and of the

indignities before the High Priests, and in the yard of Herod, flow silently with Blood. The weight of the Cross opens the wounds wider still and increases the Blood-shedding. It also disturbs the Crown and keeps it freshly bleeding; while it makes another wound of its own upon the shoulder, and is the cause of new wounds in the knees through the falls which it occasions. The Blood and the Cross are together now. Here is the actual prelude of Redemption. Moreover the Way of the Cross is a great mystery of prophecy and figure. It is a prophecy of the history of the Church; it is a type of our Lord's own life in the Church through all the ages of unjudged time,—a Blood-dropping life, wearily up to the Doom. This is the meaning of its indiscriminate profusion. Good and evil alike are stained with it. It flows to save souls; but it will flow over souls who will not let it save them. It has but one law; it must flow. It is the one mission of the Precious Blood,—to be shed.

The Precious Blood has at last found a home, which is seemingly dearer to it than the Sacred Heart. It is the wood of the Cross. It has been so impetuous that it has shed most of itself before it reached the Cross. It flows very slowly now. But the discomfort of the Cross makes the Sacred Body hang downward and outward, and so reopens the almost exhausted wounds of the previous Blood-sheddings. The Cross is wetted by it, and the wood is darkened. Here and there a blade of grass is ruddy. There are spots on the skulls of the dead, for the dead also have their interest in the Precious Blood. The torturers and soldiers have gone down the hill with their garments and their accoutrements discolored; for the

Precious Blood shrinks not from the vilest resting-places. It abandons the slowness of its oozing, it will be precipitate once more; and as if to show that all shedding of itself was voluntary, it bids one cell of the Heart to keep what it contains, dislodges all the rest of itself with a loud cry of miraculous strength, and leaps forth at once from every cavern of the Body; and death accomplishes itself, so far as it was a natural death, by the shedding of the Blood.

Moreover the work must be a complete work. All the Blood must be separated from the Body. The Soul of Jesus, beneath the earth felt the dear constraints of that Heart, and so the Heart wooed the lance of the centurion, and the hidden Blood sprang forth, baptized, as if in gratitude, its heathen liberator with all the graces of conversion, and stole gently down the Side of Jesus, kissing the Flesh which it had animated so long.

But even amidst the repairing and beautifying force of the Resurrection, it was the will of our dearest Lord, one of the most affectionate and characteristic of all His wills, that some marks at least of the old Blood-sheddings should be retained. They should fill the souls of his elect with fresh jubilee for all eternity. So he bade the glory of the Resurrection as it beautified him by its immortalizing fires, not only to respect and retain the Five Wounds of His Sacred Body, but to beautify them with a tenfold beauty. They were to be roseate luminous suns to gladden the palaces of the Heavenly Jerusalem, which the cruel artificers of earth's Jerusalem had wrought upon him with such unintending skill. He keeps His stigmata for the love of us. Many single mysteries seem to tell me

the whole of Jesus; yet I find I can not spare the rest, for each has its needful revelation of His sweetness. But if I were compelled to choose one thing only as being all memorials of my Saviour in one, I would choose this keeping of His stigmata. It signifies so many things, and it signifies them all so tenderly. When one we love does something more than usually like himself, our love leaps up with joy; and when He does it unexpectedly, our hearts burn for being taken unawares. Jesus has described His whole Self as in a concise Gospel, in this one act of keeping the stigmata of His blessed Wounds. I seem to know Him better, and to be more sure I know Him rightly, because of this dear pathos which abides unconsumed amidst the burnings of that Easter glory, this lingering of the Passion among the splendors of the Resurrection.

PART IV.

SANCTIFICATION.

CHAPTER I.

JUSTIFICATION.

As the great work of the Incarnation seems to flow out of Creation, and to be the crowning and fulfilling of it, so does the work of Justification proceed from the Incarnation, or hang from it as its divine and glorious fruit. The Justification of a sinner is surely one of the most beautiful works of God, and deserves our most loving contemplation. Looking at it simply as the transit from a state of sin to a state of sanctifying grace, without any considerations of the dispositions remotely or proximately comprehended in it, it is full of wonder, and of the peculiar character of the Divine operations. The first moment of the life of grace is the last moment of the life of sin, nay, rather it is itself the death of sin. Nothing comes between. Neither does God use the instrumentality of angel or saint, but He Himself immediately communicates that grace to His creature's soul, and the creature is justified not merely by an act of the divine will, but by an unspeakable communication of the divine nature. It is a greater work than the creation for many reasons. First of all, it implies the Incarnation as well. Then Creation is simply out

of nothing; whereas justification is accomplished on a previously reluctant matter, the corrupt will of man. He, says St. Austin, who made you without you, will not justify you, without you. Creation again is ordained for a natural good, justification for a supernatural one. To quote St. Austin again, It is a greater thing to justify the impious than to create heaven and earth. The good of a single grace, says St. Thomas, is greater than the natural good of the whole universe, and the Church in her collect teaches us that God manifests His omnipotence chiefly in sparing and showing mercy.

Let us take a case to make it clear. A man goes forth from his house into the streets of London in a state of sin. The weight of God's wrath, and the curse of the Blood of Christ are heavy upon his soul. To the angels he is a sight of unutterable loathing and disgust if his state is known to them. He would not dare to have his sins whispered in the crowd, for the contempt even of his fellow-sinners would crush him to the earth. He is the slave of the dark demon, in a bondage more foul, more degrading, more tyrannical, more abject, than the horrors of African slavery can show. In his breast, though he hardly knows it, he has the beginnings of hell, and the germs of everlasting hatred of Almighty God. Cain, savage and gloomy and restless, wandering curse-goaded over the unpeopled earth was not worse off than he, perhaps better. In the street he meets a funeral. Thoughts crowd into his mind. Faith is awake and on the watch. Grace disposes him for grace. The veil falls from sin; and he turns from the hideous vision with shame, with detestation, with humility.

The eye of his soul glances to his crucified Redeemer. Fear has led the way to hope, and hope has the heart to resolve, and faith tells him that his resolution will be accepted, and he loves—how can he help loving Him who will accept so poor a resolution? There is a pressure on his soul. It was the pressure of the Creator, omnipotent, immense, all-holy, and incomprehensible, on his living soul. The unseen Hand was laid on him only for a moment. He has not passed half a dozen shop-fronts, and the work is done. He is contrite. Hell is vanquished. The angels of heaven are in a stir of joy. His soul is beautiful. God is yearning over it with love, and with ineffable desire. It needs only one cold touch of death, and an eternity of glory lies with all its vast and spacious realms of Vision before him. And yet this work, so wonderful, so beautiful, so altogether worthy of the Divine Perfections, is not done once only, or now and then, or periodically, or to make an epoch in the world's history; it is being accomplished, in churches, in hospitals, in prisons, on shipboard, on the scaffold, in the streets and fields of daily labor, close to the mower or the reaper, or the gardener or the vine-dresser, who dreams not that God is in his neighborhood so busy, and at so stupendous a work. For to turn a child of Satan into a son of God is so tremendous a work that St. Peter Chrysologus says of it, that the angels are astonished, heaven marvels, earth trembles, flesh can not bear it, ears can not take it in, the mind can not reach it, the whole creation is too weak to endure its magnitude, and is short of intellect to esteem it rightly, and is afraid of believing it, because it is so much.

CHAPTER II.

KINDNESS.

The weakness of man, and the way in which he is at the mercy of external accidents in the world, has always been a favorite topic with the moralists. They have expatiated upon it with so much amplitude of rhetorical exaggeration, that it has at last produced in our minds a sense of unreality against which we rebel. Man is no doubt very weak. He can only be passive in a thunder-storm, or run in an earthquake. The odds are against him when he is managing his ship in a hurricane, or when pestilence is raging in the house where he lives. Heat and cold, drought and rain, are his masters. He is weaker than an elephant, and subordinate to the east wind. This is all very true; nevertheless man has considerable powers, considerable enough to leave him, as proprietor of this planet, in possession of at least as much comfortable jurisdiction as most landed proprietors have in a free country. He has one power in particular which is not sufficiently dwelt on, and with which we will at present occupy ourselves. It is the power of making the world happy, or at least of so greatly diminishing the amount of unhappiness in it, as to make it quite a different world from what it is at present. This

power is called kindness. The worst kinds of unhappiness, as well as the greatest amount of it, come from our conduct to each other. If our conduct therefore were under the control of kindness, it would be nearly the opposite of what it is, and so the state of the world would be almost reversed. We are for the most part unhappy because the world is an unkind world. But the world is only unkind for lack of kindness in the units who compose it. Now if all this is so much as half true, it is plainly worth our while to take some trouble to gain clear and definite notions of kindness. We practice more easily what we already know clearly.

We must first ask ourselves what kindness is. Words which we are using constantly soon cease to have much distinct meaning in our minds. They become symbols and figures rather than words, and we content ourselves with the general impression they make upon us. Now let us be a little particular about kindness and describe it as accurately as we can. Kindness is the overflowing of self upon others. We put others in the place of self. We treat them as we should wish to be treated ourselves. We change places with them. For the time self is another and others are self. Our self-love takes the shape of complacency in unselfishness. We can not speak of the virtues without thinking of God. What would the overflow of self upon others be in Him the Ever-blessed and Eternal? It was the act of creation. Creation was divine kindness. From it, as from a fountain, flow the possibilities, the powers, the blessings of all created kindness. This is an honorable genealogy for kindness. Then again, kindness is the

coming to the rescue of others when they need it, and it is in our power to supply what they need; and this is the work of the attributes of God toward his creatures. His omnipotence is forever making up our deficiency of power. His justice is continually correcting our erroneous judgments. His mercy is always consoling our fellow-creatures under our hard-heartedness. His truth is perpetually hindering the consequences of our falsehood. His omniscience makes our ignorance succeed as if it were knowledge. His perfections are incessantly coming to the rescue of our imperfections. This is the definition of Providence; and kindness is our imitation of this divine action.

Moreover kindness is also like divine grace; for it gives men something which neither self nor nature can give them. What it gives them is something of which they are in want, or something which only another person can give, such as consolation; and besides this, the manner in which this is given is a true gift itself, better far than the thing given: and what is all this but an allegory of grace? Kindness adds sweetness to every thing. It is kindness which makes life's capabilities blossom, and paints them with their cheering hues, and endows them with their invigorating fragrance. Whether it waits on its superiors, or ministers to its inferiors, or disports itself with its equals, its work is marked by a prodigality which the strictest discretion can not blame. It does unnecessary work which when done, looks the most necessary work that could be. If it goes to soothe sorrow, it does more than soothe it. If it relieves a want, it can not do so without doing some-

thing more than relieve it. But what is all this like, except the exuberance of the divine government? See how, turn which way we will, kindness is entangled with the thought of God! Last of all, the secret impulse out of which kindness acts is an instinct which is the noblest part of ourselves, the undoubted remnant of the image of God which was given us at the first. We must therefore never think of kindness as being a common growth of our nature, common in the sense of being of little value. It is the nobility of man. In all its modifications it reflects a heavenly type. It is a divine thing rather than a human one, and it is human because it springs from the soul of man just at the point where the divine image was graven deepest.

Such is kindness. Now let us consider its office in the world, in order that we may get a clearer idea of itself. It makes life more endurable. The burden of life presses heavily upon multitudes of the children of men. It is a yoke very often of such peculiar nature that familiarity, instead of practically lightening it, makes it harder to bear. Perseverance is the hand of time pressing the yoke down upon our galled shoulders with all its might. There are men to whom life is always approaching the unbearable. It only stops just short of it. But, without having recourse to these extreme cases, sin alone is sufficient to make life intolerable to a virtuous man. Actual sin is not essential to this. The possibility of sinning, the danger of sinning, the temptation to sin, the example of so much sin around us, and above all, the sinful unworthiness of men much better than ourselves,—these are sufficient to make life drain us to the last

dregs of our endurance. In all these cases it is the office of kindness to make life more bearable; and if its success in its office is often only partial, some amount of success is at least invariable.

It is true that we make ourselves more unhappy than other people make us. No slight portion of this self-inflicted unhappiness arises from our sense of justice being so continually wounded by the events of life, while the incessant friction of the world never allows the wound to heal. There are some men whose practical talents are completely swamped by the keenness of their sense of injustice. They go through life as failures, because the pressure of injustice upon themselves, or the sight of its pressing upon others has unmanned them. If they begin a line of action, they can not go through with it. They are perpetually shying, like a nettlesome horse, at the objects by the road-side. They have much in them, but they have died without any thing coming of them. Kindness steps forward to remedy this evil also. Each solitary kind action that is done the world over, is working briskly in its own sphere to restore the balance between right and wrong. The more kindness there is on the earth at any given moment, the greater is the tendency of the balance between right and wrong to correct itself and remain in equilibrium. Nay, this is short of the truth. Kindness allies itself with right to invade the wrong and beat it off the earth. Justice is necessarily an aggressive virtue, and kindness is the amiability of justice.

Mindful of its divine origin and of its hereditary descent from the primal act of creation, this dear virtue is forever entering into God's original disposition

as Creator. He means the world to be a happy world and kindness meant it also. He gave it the power to be happy; and kindness was a great part of that very power. By His benediction He commanded creation to be happy; kindness with its usual genial spirit of accommodation, now tries to persuade a world which has dared to disobey the divine command. Kindness sees less clearly the ruin of God's original idea, than it sees still that first beneficent idea, and it sets to work to cleanse what is defiled and to restore what is defaced. It sorrows over sin, but like buoyant-hearted men, it finds in its sorrow the best impulse of its activity. It is laboring always in ten thousand places, and the work at which it labors is always the same, to make God's world more like His original conception of it.

But while it thus ministers to Him as Creator, it is no less energetic and successful in preparing and enlarging His ways as Saviour. It is constantly winning strayed souls back to Him, opening hearts that seemed obstinately closed, enlightening minds that had been wilfully darkened, skilfully throwing the succors of hope into the strongholds that were on the point of capitulating to despair, lifting endeavor from low to high, from high to higher, from higher to highest. Everywhere kindness is the best pioneer of the Precious Blood. We often begin our own repentance by acts of kindness, or through them. Probably the majority of repentances have begun in the reception of acts of kindness, which, if not unexpected, touched men by the sense of their being so undeserved. Doubtless the terrors of the Lord are often the beginning of that wisdom which we name

conversion; but men must be frightened in a kind way, or the fright will only make them unbelievers. Kindness has converted more sinners than either zeal, eloquence, or learning; and these three last have never converted any one unless they were kind also. In short, kindness makes us as gods to each other. Yet while it lifts us so high, it sweetly keeps us low. For the continual sense which a kind heart has of its own need of kindness keeps it humble. There are no hearts to which kindness is so indispensable as those that are exuberantly kind themselves.

But let us look at the matter from another point. What does kindness do for those to whom we show it? We have looked at its office on a grand scale in the whole world: let us narrow our field of observation, and see what it does for those who are its immediate objects. What we note first, as of great consequence, is the immense power of kindness in bringing out the good points of the characters of others. Almost all men have more goodness in them than the ordinary intercourse of the world enables us to discover. Indeed, most men, we may be sure, from glimpses we now and then obtain, carry with them to the grave much undeveloped nobility. Life is seldom so varied or so adventurous as to enable a man to unfold all that is in him. A creature who has got capabilities in him to live forever can hardly have room in three-score years to do more than give specimens of what he might be and will be. But, besides this, who has not seen how disagreeable and faulty characters will expand under kindness. Generosity springs up fresh and vigorous, from under a superincumbent load of

meanness. Modesty suddenly discloses itself from some safe cavern where it has survived years of sin. Virtues come to life, and in their infantine robustness strangle habits of vice which a score of years has been spent in forming. It is wonderful what capabilities grace can find in the most unpromising character. It is a thing to be much pondered. Duly reflected on, it might alter our view of the world altogether. But kindness does not reveal these things to us external spectators only. It reveals a man to himself. It rouses the long dormant self-respect, with which grace will speedily ally itself, and purify it by its alliance. Neither does it content itself with making a revelation. It develops as well as reveals. It gives these newly-disclosed capabilities of virtue, vigor and animation. It presents them with occasions. It even trains and tutors them. It causes the first actions of the recovering soul to be actions on high principles and from generous motives. It shields and defends moral convalescence from the dangers which beset it. A kind act has picked up many a fallen man, who has afterwards slain his tens of thousands for his Lord, and has entered the Heavenly City at last as a conqueror, amidst the acclamations of the saints, and with the welcome of his Sovereign.

It is probable that no man ever had a kind action done to him who did not in consequence commit a sin less than he otherwise would have done. I can look out over the earth at any hour, and I see in spirit innumerable angels threading the crowds of men, and hindering sin by all manner of artifices which shall not interfere with the freedom of man's

will. I see also invisible grace, made visible for the moment, flowing straight from God in and upon and around the souls of men, and sin giving way and yielding place to it. But together with grace and the angels there is a third band of diminutive figures, with veils upon their heads, which are flitting everywhere, making gloomy men smile, and angry men grow meek, and sick men cease to groan, lighting up hope in the eyes of the dying, sweetening the heart of the bitter, and adroitly turning men from sin just when they are on the point of committing it. They seem to have strange power. Men listen to them who have been deaf to the pleadings of angels. They gain admittance into hearts before the doors of which grace has lost its patience and gone away. No sooner are the doors open than these veiled messengers, these cunning ministers of God, have gone and returned with lightning-like speed, and brought grace back with them. They are most versatile in their operations. One while they are the spies, another while its sappers and miners, another while its light cavalry, another while they bear the brunt of the battle, and for more than five thousand years they have hardly known the meaning of defeat. These are the acts of kindness which are daily enrolled in God's service from the rising to the setting of the sun; and this is the second work they do in souls,—to lessen the number of their sins. There are few gifts more precious to a soul than to make its sins fewer. It is in our power to do this daily, and sometimes often in a day.

Another work which our kindness does in the hearts of others, is to encourage them in their efforts after

good. Habits of sin, even when put to death as habits, leave many evil legacies behind them. One of the most disastrous parts of their inheritance is discouragement. There are few things which resist grace as it does. Obstinacy even is more hopeful. We may see floods of grace descend upon the disheartened soul, and it shows no symptoms of reviving. Grace runs off it, as the rain runs from the roofs. Whichever of its three forms, peevishness, lethargy, or delusion, it may assume, God's mercy must lay regular siege to it, or it will never be taken. But we all of us need encouragement to do good. The path of virtue even when it is not up hill, is rough and stony, and each day's journey is a little longer than our strength admits of, only there are no means of shortening it. You may love God and love Him truly, and high motives may be continually before you; nevertheless you must be quite conscious to yourself of being soon fatigued, nay, perhaps of a normal lassitude growing with your years; and you must remember how especially the absence of sympathy tried you, and how all things began to look like delusion, because no one encouraged you in your work. Alas! how many hearts have sunk under this not ignoble weariness! How many plans for God's glory have fallen to the ground, which a bright look or a kind eye would have propped up! O what a wretched thing it is to be unkind! I think, with the thought of the Precious Blood, I can better face my sins at the last judgment than my unkindness, with all its miserable fertility of evil consequences. But if we have no notion of the far-reaching mischief which unkindness does, so neither can we rightly

estimate the good which kindness may do. Very often a heart is drooping. It is bending over itself lower and lower. The cloud of sadness thickens. Temptations lie all around, and are multiplying in strength and number every moment. Every thing forebodes approaching sin. Not so much as a kind action, not so much as a kind word, but the mere tone of voice, the mere fixing of the eye has conveyed sympathy to the poor suffering heart, and all is right again in one instant. The downcast soul has revived under that mere peep of human sunshine, and is encouraged to do bravely the very thing which in despondency it had almost resolved to leave undone. That coming sin might have been the soul's first step to an irretrievable ruin. That encouragement may be the first link of a new chain, which when its length is finished shall be called final perseverance.

Moreover kindness is infectious. No kind action ever stopped with itself. Fecundity belongs to it in its own right. One kind action leads to another. By one we commit ourselves to more than one. Our example is followed. The single act of kindness throws out roots in all directions, and the roots spring up and make fresh trees, and the rapidity of the growth is equal to its extent. But this fertility is not confined to ourselves, or to others who may be kind to the same person to whom we have been kind. It is chiefly to be found in the person himself whom we have benefited. This is the greatest work which kindness does to others, that it makes them kind themselves. The kindest men are generally those who have received the greatest number of kindnesses. It does indeed sometimes happen, according

to the law which in noble natures produces good out of evil, that men who have had to feel the want of kindness are themselves lavishly kind when they have the power. But in general the rule is that kindness makes men kind. Perhaps an act of kindness never dies, but extends the invisible undulations of its influence over the breadth of centuries. Thus, for all these reasons, there is no better thing which we can do for others than to be kind to them; and our kindness is the greatest gift they can receive except the grace of God.

There is always a certain sort of selfishness in the spiritual life. The order of charity rules it so. Our first consideration is the glory of God in the salvation of our own souls. We must take hold of this glory by that handle first of all. Every thing will be presumption and delusion, if it is taken in any other order. Hence, even while speaking of kindness, it is not out of place for us to consider the work which it does for ourselves. We have seen what it does for the world. We have seen what it does for our neighbors. Now let us see how it blesses ourselves. Foremost among the common ways in which kind actions benefit ourselves, may be mentioned the help they give us in getting clear of selfishness. The tendency of nature to love itself, has more the character of a habit than a law. Opposite conduct always tends to weaken it,—which would hardly be the case if it were a law. Kindness, moreover, partly from the pleasure which accompanies it, partly from the blessing it draws down upon itself, and partly from its similitude to God, tends very rapidly to set into a well-formed habit. Selfishness is in no slight degree a point of

view from which we regard things. Kindness alters our view by altering our point of view. Now does any thing tease us more than our selfishness? Does any thing more effectually retard our spiritual growth? Selfishness indeed furnishes us with a grand opportunity, the opportunity of getting to hate ourselves because of the odiousness of this self-worship. But how few of us have got either the depth or the bravery to profit by this magnificent occasion! On the whole, selfishness must be put down or our progress will cease. A series of kind actions turned against it with playful courage, and selfishness is, I will not say killed, but stunned; and that is a great convenience, though it is not the whole work accomplished. Perhaps we may never come to be quite unselfish. However there is but one road toward that, which is kindness; and every step taken on that road is a long stride heavenward.

Kindness seems to know of some secret fountain of joy, deep in the soul, which it can touch without revealing its locality and cause to send its waters upward, and overflow the heart. Inward happiness almost always follows a kind action; and who has not long since experienced in himself that inward happiness is the atmosphere in which great things are done for God. Furthermore kindness is a constant godlike occupation, and implies many supernatural operations in those who practice kindness upon the motives of faith. Much grace goes along with kindness, collateral graces more than sufficient in themselves to make a saint. Observation would lead us to the conclusion that kindness is not a native of the land of youth. Men grow kinder as they grow older. There

are, of course, natures which are kindly from the cradle. But not many men have seen a really kind boy or girl. In like manner, as kindness in the natural world implies age, in the spiritual world it implies grace. It does not belong to the fervor of beginnings, but to the solidity of progress. Indeed, Christian kindness implies so much grace that it almost assures the exercise of humility. A proud man is seldom a kind man. Humility makes us kind, and kindness makes us humble. It is one of the many instances in the matter of the virtues, of good qualities being at once not only causes and effects together, but also their own causes and their own effects. It would be foolish to say that humility is an easy virtue. The very lowest degree of it is a difficult height to climb. But this much may be said for kindness, that it is the easiest road to humility, and infallible, as well as easy: and is not humility just what we want, just what we are at this moment coveting, just what will break down barriers, and give us free course on our way to God?

Kindness does so much for us that it would be almost more easy to enumerate what it does not do, than to sum up what it does. It operates more energetically in some characters than in others. But it works wondrous changes in all. It is kindness which enables most men to put off the inseparable unpleasantness of youth. It watches the thoughts, controls the words, and helps us to unlearn early manhood's inveterate habit of criticism. It is astonishing how masterful it is in its influence over our dispositions, and yet how gentle, quiet, consistent, and successful. It makes us thoughtful and considerate. Detached

acts of kindness may be the offspring of impulse. Yet he is mostly a good man whose impulses are good. But on the long run, habitual kindness is not a mere series of generous impulses, but the steadfast growth of generous deliberation. Much thought must go to consistent kindness, and much self-denying legislation. With most of us the very outward shape of our lives is, without fault of ours, out of harmony with persevering kindness. We have to humor circumstances. Our opportunities require management, and to be patient in waiting to do good to others is a fine work of grace. It is on account of all this, that kindness makes us so attractive to others. It imparts a tinge of pathos to our characters, in which our asperities disappear, or at least only give a breadth of shadow to our hearts which increases their beauty by making it more serious. A kind man, is a man who is never self-occupied. He is genial, he is sympathetic, he is brave. How shall we express in one word the many things which kindness does for us who practice it? It prepares us with an especial preparation for the paths of disinterested love of God.

Now surely we can not say that this subject of kindness is an unimportant one. It is in reality a great part of the spiritual life. It is also a peculiar participation of the spirit of Jesus, which is the life of all holiness. It reconciles worldly men to religious people; and really, however contemptible worldly men are in themselves, they have souls to save, and it were much to be wished that devout persons would make their devotion a little less angular and aggressive to worldly people, provided they can do so without lowering practice or conceding principle.

Devout people are, as a class, the least kind of all classes. Men may be charitable, yet not kind, merciful, yet not kind, self-denying, yet not kind. If they would only add a little common kindness to their uncommon graces, they would convert ten, where now they only abate the prejudices of one.

We have been speaking of kindness. Perhaps we might better have called it the spirit of Jesus. But you will say perhaps, "After all it is a very little virtue, very much a matter of natural temperament, and rather an affair of good manners than of holy living." Well, I will not argue with you. The grass of the fields is better than the cedars of Lebanon. It feeds more, and it rests the eye better,—that thymy, daisy-eyed carpet, making earth fair and sweet and home-like. Kindness is the turf of the spiritual world, whereon the sheep of Christ feed quietly beneath the Shepherd's eye.

CHAPTER III.

WOUNDED FEELINGS.

Sensitiveness is neither a virtue nor a vice. But it is not on that account less intimately connected with the spiritual life. As years go by, their varying circumstances gradually disclose to us depths and peculiarities of our own character, which are deeply concerned with holiness, yet are not in themselves either virtues or vices. They are capabilities of both, and can with equal facility lend themselves to either. They are points in our character at which we begin to go wrong, or at which grace exhibits a predilection to graft itself. Thus they are strengths as well as weaknesses. Sensitiveness is one of the most important of these things. I do not see how sublime virtue can be reached without it, while on the other hand we behold every day into what depths of incalculable meanness it can plunge great minds, affectionate hearts, and strong characters. It is the secret cause of one half of the disedifying inconsistencies of religious people. It rules us more powerfully than any of our passions. It absorbs our character into itself, until it alone almost becomes our character. It makes every thing in life exquisite and exaggerated. Our pleasures and our pains are both exquisite. It belongs especially

to affectionate dispositions; yet it is not the same thing as tenderness. Tenderness comes much nearer to being a virtue. But sensitiveness without tenderness is a very terrible thing. When separated from it, sensitiveness is for the most part allied with cruelty, and cruelty is a complete disability to be a saint. Cruel men are more common than we might have supposed, for modern society exhibits great facilities and conveniences for cruelty. Nay, what too often is domestic life because of this cruelty, but a veil behind which lie interminable regions of unhappiness, trodden wildly or trodden wearily by unsuspected thousands every day?

Sensitive men are also very quick and keen in their sympathies; but these sympathies are very narrow. Generally speaking, such men can only sympathize with sorrows which they themselves have passed through. Their hearts can not outgrow the circle of their own experience. They are often not large-hearted men, neither are they forgiving men. There is, indeed, much narrowness both of mind and heart about sensitiveness when it is not found in combination with other things. It is always degenerating into umbrageousness, and so darkening the heart, unless that heart is peculiarly blithe and sunny in itself. A man who is sensitive without being elastic is a false character, and will always be found on trial far worse than he seems. Last of all, a sensitive man is generally disinclined to an interior life. At the same time, sensitiveness confers almost a microscopic power upon the conscience, and so enables us to perceive the finer shades of evil, and to correspond to the more delicate operations of grace. For the pres-

ent, let this be enough as a general description of sensitiveness and its affinities.

It is a common gift in its ordinary degrees, but very uncommon in its highest degrees. But in almost all hearts the amount of liability to wounded feelings is hardly credible beforehand. It is sufficient completely to obscure our judgment, to deceive our affections, and to make us forget proprieties in our outward demeanor. Men are constantly placing themselves in false or foolish positions under its influence. They can only avoid this, either supernaturally through great grace, or naturally through a keen sense of the ridiculous, which is one of our greatest safeguards through life. Sensitiveness is therefore, on the whole, a common phenomenon in the spiritual life, so common as to justify our making it the subject of a separate investigation. All hearts quiver when they are touched. If some do not, these are only exceptions enough to prove the rule. Piety, if any thing, keenly quickens this natural sensitiveness. Indeed in its earlier stages it quickens it almost to a morbid extent. This is one of the unlovelinesses which cling about recently-converted people. It makes their devotion only a new capability of censoriousness. Thus the mortification of it becomes one of the primary duties of the spiritual life, and the intense suffering which this causes, is the ladder by which we climb higher.

I wish to call your attention to this matter, not only because it is a very practical one, but also because I think we hardly do justice to sensitiveness. We speak of wounded feelings as if they were far more wrong than they are. We confound them with the

consequences which follow from them, when they are not under the dominion of grace. Our own attainments are perhaps too low to enable us to estimate the magnificent fruits of wounded feelings when they are consecrated by grace. Our tone about wounded feelings is given to be exaggerated condemnation. This leads to many evils, but two especially,—scrupulousness, and discouragement. Theology tells us that our Blessed Lord's Body was especially formed for suffering. In like manner we should suppose His Sacred Heart was sensitive above all other hearts. It is this which carries the sufferings of His Passion deeper down than we can follow them. Our sensitiveness, as well as our other characteristics, must be exalted into a conformity with His. Let us look at it therefore with fairness and moderation. If wounded feelings are a fountain of sins, they are also a capability of great holiness. They do not want killing, they want supernaturalizing. Perhaps it is not possible for us to make ourselves obtuse; but it is an enormous mischief even to try to do so. If we succeed, then we have stereotyped our present lowness of grace, and have gained nothing but a worthless diminution of some of the noblest pains of life. Thus the mortification of sensitiveness is a peculiar process. It is not a blunting, or stunning, or putting to death of sensitiveness, as it is with vices. But it is a brave making use of the torture of our wounded feelings to get nearer God, and to be kinder to men. What we have to avoid is the common error of blaming the feelings, instead of blaming consequences which would never have come of them, if we had corresponded to grace. This is not a mere subtlety or a

piece of metaphysical straw-splitting. I grant that there is a legitimate prejudice against refined distinctions, but we can not do without them in the spiritual life. Coarseness and roughness spoil every thing there. Simplicity is the highest grace and the last reached; and what is simplicity but an almost incredible supernatural refinement.

Sensitiveness affects us in various ways. It makes us fanciful. We imagine offence has been intended where it was never dreamed of. It constructs imaginary histories upon what is often no foundation at all. Even where there is a basis of truth, it builds more upon it than it will bear. It magnifies and exaggerates things. It puts the wildest constructions upon innocent actions. It mistakes indifference for intensity. It throws a monstrous significance into a chance phrase, and then broods on it for years, literally for years. From being fanciful we pass to being suspicious. When we do not see phantoms, we are sure they are lying in ambush. We start at shadows. We make all life like riding a mettlesome horse by moonlight, when there are shadows at every turn; and there are few things more irksome, or more irritating. Our mind is crowded with suspicions. We forget God. We become distracted in prayer. We are hardly able to distinguish between what is shadow and what is substance. It is difficult to say whether we grow more intolerable to ourselves or to those around us. From being suspicious we pass to being umbrageous. We grow moody and bitter. We add sulkiness to our suspicions. There is no dealing with us. If an offender begs our pardon, we do not forgive him. We discover some new

offence in the very act. He had no right to beg our pardon. He put himself into a position of superiority by doing so. We are angry with him for it. It is just like him. He should have waited till we made the advances. We will not believe he is sincere. On whichever side men take us, they will find us equally unmanageable. They will meet with nothing but rebuffs. Now, what grace, what conceivable Christ-like thing can grow in such an atmosphere as this?

But shadows distort the bulk of things. So when we are umbrageous, all our feelings connected with the subject-matter which annoys us are disproportionate. This leads us into all manner of mistakes. We attach the wrong things to the wrong persons. Hence comes excitement, excitement which by morosely brooding over itself becomes a sort of subordinate madness. Then it is that we become almost incurable. For then it is that we become as sure that we are in the right as if it had been revealed to us. The proofs of the unkindness of others are overwhelming. We put our evidence together, and get up our case against our best friend, it may be, or at least against an unhappily offending friend, as a barrister gets up a case against a murderer. The excitement burns our judgment into us, as the fire anneals the porcelain, and fixes the pattern and the colors. We shall never change our minds now. Then come the sins, outstreaming like a mountain torrent,—thoughts, words, actions, manifold displays of outward irritability. Every one of these is most likely irrevocable. We have dropped a mere word of bitterness, and it clings like a stain to the poor

offender for life. It maims his power of doing good. It throws a shadow over his sunshine. Yet perhaps the offence was imaginary, or perhaps it was nothing like so great; and after all what was it when weighed against past kindnesses? We have now got very far. We have come in sight of hatred. It is possible now for us to hate. Possible; yet is not the mere possibility terrific? Oh, who can set bounds to the unmercifulness of a sensitive man?

This is the bad side of things. Here is plenty of occupation for a holy self-revenge. There is abundance to mortify in all this. We must be very unsparing of ourselves. We may plead our health as being in a great measure to blame for these ugly developments of our sensitiveness. Very likely this is true. Indigestion will make even a bright-minded, limpid-hearted man umbrageous. But the truth of all this is no defence, and only a poor extenuation. But at any rate it is no exemption from the obligation of mortifying these wounded feelings. We must be swift also as well as unsparing. We must work day and night as men do on the railway when a bridge is broken down. All traffic between heaven and ourselves is interrupted till we have got the ruin out of the way. Those grim laborers by torchlight in the thick darkness of night, they are our models in this desperate task of mortifying our wounded feelings.

I do not think that sensitiveness is an evidence of our fallen state, but only that certain developments of it are so. On the contrary, I believe that in itself it is a grand gift, and that he is most fortunate who is most sensitive. The quickness to feel an unkindness, the tenderness which makes us shrink before

we are touched, the subtlety which causes us to fancy unkind intentions when there were none, the delicacy which is almost crushed by little roughnesses,—these are evidently without a shadow of sin. They are not moral actions. They are both involuntary, and indeliberate. They are our character and constitution. Grace may change and elevate them, may fortify them with a gift of the Holy Ghost, and counterbalance them by making us love God more fervently and care for His interest more exclusively. But meanwhile they are not wrong in themselves. We are cast down if we feel a thing with exceeding keenness, which is in reality a feeling we can not help, a feeling which, if it is to be overcome, can only be overcome gradually and in the long run, as the result of continuous processes of grace. Our self-annoyance ought not to begin till we proceed to act upon our sensitiveness, whether inwardly by deliberate thoughts, and that brooding which is a proximate occasion of sins against charity, or outwardly by word, manner, or action. Neither is the undiminished keenness of feeling to be regarded as any proof of immortification; yet how often are people overwhelmed with sadness because they have mistaken it for one.

In order to understand in what the mortification of our sensitiveness consists, let us take a case. Some shadow has come between us and one whom we love, and whom we continue to love in spite of the shadow. The shadow broadens, lengthens, thickens, we hardly know how. Words of his are reported to us. They have a dubious, if not an unkind, sound about them. We are stung and the pain is so great that we wince under it. Experience has taught us

that reported words are hardly ever exact; and even when exact they put on a new character by being separated from manner, tone, look, and circumstances. The unkindness of reported words is more often from the mind of the reporter than from the mind of the original speaker. A man given to report things is never a kind man. We know all this. Nevertheless we are stung by the words. They rankle. Then come some actions or looks of our friend which admit of an unkindly interpretation. Our first impulse is to interpret them by our own pain at the former words. Like the roots of trees it is in the nature of a misunderstanding to entangle itself as it grows. It is its instinct to outgrow the possibility of being ever explained. The shadow, then, still continues. We do not speak. But our friend is, unconsciously perhaps, causing us the most exquisite torture by nearly every thing he says or does, or is reported to have said or done in regard to us. Now, let us suppose that while we have been thus wincing, we have been forcing ourselves intellectually to believe that no unkindness was intended, that we have checked ourselves sharply whenever we have caught ourselves brooding on the matter, that we have not allowed ourselves to express our sensitiveness in complaints or in actions; that we have prayed more than ever for him who is the cause of our suffering, and that, when we could do so without giving him pain or discomfort, we have humbled ourselves by telling him of those inward feelings which must seem to him exaggerated and absurd, even if not petty, base, and mean,—let us suppose all this, and then though our sensitiveness be as lively as ever, and our pain as sharp, we have been by God's

grace mortifying it to good purpose. It is truly miserable work. For the very struggle defiles us. Our inward life is all thrown into disarray, and kept so perhaps for months or years. There are many misunderstandings which we shall only lay down, where so many other burdens are laid down, just on this side of the judgment-seat. Hearts are often sundered in this life whose love of each other is growing secretly beneath the shadow of misunderstanding; and the unexpected growth will be one of the sweet surprises of eternity. Meanwhile if we have done what has been described above, we are not only without sin, but we have gone heavenward by strides rather than steps.

I have defended sensitiveness, and yet I have been saying a great many strong things against it. So I must not conclude without saying something about its privileges. Even in natural things it is the source of our keenest and most refined enjoyment. It is sensitiveness alone which finds out what lies under the monotony of life, and so gives us spirits to bear it. It glorifies all our joys, and makes sorrows more tolerable by its carrying them deeper down into our hearts. While it widens the sphere of our love, it also intensifies its action. It gives a zest to the practice of virtue, which is in natural things what divine sweetness is in spiritual things.

Sensitiveness also peculiarly enables us to understand God, to penetrate the meaning of His ways with us, to feel each touch of His grace, to discover the faintest workings of a divine vocation, and to be uneasy under any scarcely perceptible drifting away from His will. Sensitiveness also makes us unworldly

by continually bringing home to us our unfitness for the world. It is a gift whose dower is suffering, and which therefore makes us pine in our exile, even while it is contributing joys which are the best natural consolations of that exile. It is a source of sanctification uniting in itself all the four excellences, according to which we judge of the importance and efficacy of means of grace. It is constant; it is acute; it is unsuspected; it is fatal to self-love. By unsuspected I mean two things; first that it goes on sanctifying us even while we are not adverting to the fact; and secondly that so little delusion adheres to its methods of operation that we may trust ourselves to it without suspicion. Last of all, it is a peculiarly Christ-like fountain of suffering. Think of the mystery of the Agony in the garden. It was a great part of that mystery that therein our dearest Lord put Himself in the place of every one of us. He bore our sins; He identified Himself with our shames; He felt our shrinkings. Our finest sensitiveness is coarse and blunt compared with His. We rudely pressed every one of the quivering keys of His Sacred Heart, and made it utter the low and plaintive notes of a sorrow beyond our understanding. He shrank like a sensitive plant, from the shame with which we covered Him. In the other mysteries of the Passion we have outward pains, external shame, publicity, unkindness, and the desertion of friends; but the suffering of the Agony was in no slight degree, and above the other mysteries, the keenness of wounded feelings. To us therefore, the model and the consolation in our excess of wounded feeling is that most dear and divine Heart.

CHAPTER IV.

ON A TASTE FOR READING.

Other things being equal, a person beginning the spiritual life with a taste for reading has a much greater chance both of advancing and of persevering, than one who is destitute of such a taste. Experience shows that it is almost equal to a grace. Goethe said that if men wanted to think, they must avoid "thinking about thinking." This is a fatal process, a quagmire which has sucked up generations of young men, and is capable of absorbing as many generations more. The best test of a system of education is the power of thinking which it engenders in men. If we are at all observant, we must have been struck with this feature in the conversation of self-educated men, that, while it is very often clever, it is hardly ever characterized by real thought. The power of thinking is an immense help in the spiritual life. But it belongs to the few, and is mostly the result of an excellent education, which, is in this matter as in all others, the grand natural support of the life of the Church. Next to the power of thinking we may reckon the power of reading, or, to be less exacting, the taste for reading, which in spiritual matters is practically the same thing with the multitude of men, as the most important of all the personal non-super-

natural qualifications, for an inward life. As the power of thinking is the highest test of a system of education, so the second test by which it should be tried is its successful creation of a taste for reading. But by all persons a taste for reading is positively attainable, while the power of thinking is not so. Men who have been loosely and disjointedly educated, or educated without the cultivation of their imaginations, will have all the more difficulty in acquiring this taste for reading. Still the difficulties are not very formidable. The process is little more than one of time. Anyhow, whether we have the taste for reading already, or whether we have to acquire it, we may be sure that he who begins a devout life without it, may consider the ordinary difficulties of such a life multiplied in his case at least by ten. I will now make some observations with a view of showing you that this is not an exaggeration.

In the first place, the mere knowledge gained by reading spiritual books, even books which are very indirectly spiritual, is of incalculable importance. It is not easy to think out for ourselves, even very obvious things. Reading suggests them to us. It increases the light round about us, and also the light within us. We gain time by appropriating through books the experience of others. We learn methods which shorten roads. We multiply our motives of action, and we infuse new vigor into old motives by understanding them better. It is the common rule that an ill-instructed person can never attain any considerable heights in devotion. He must have for the most part a knowledge of spiritual things, and even some knowledge of theology.

In the next place, we must take into account the direct assistance in our combat which we derive from reading books about God, the soul, and the virtues, or the lives of the saints. They elicit by a gentle compulsion continued acts of love, or hope, or faith, or desire, or contrition. They are like inspirations to us. Silent divine voices leap into our souls from off the page. Spiritual reading is itself an essential exercise. It is a special and peculiar form of prayer; the management of which is one of the most important features of our spiritual day. Historically speaking, the reading of the lives of the saints alone, has been a most energetic power of holiness in the Church for long ages.

So far we have considered spiritual reading as directly an intrinsic portion of a devout life, and we have considered this very briefly inasmuch as it deserves to be handled separately, both because there is so much to be said upon it, and because what might be said is of such great importance. What we have now to bring forward, although it primarily concerns spiritual reading, applies also to reading which need be only indirectly spiritual. Every one must have experienced the good effects of religious reading as connected with prayer. Now reading feeds and furnishes prayer. It supplies matter. It plants the wilderness. The old masters called it oil for the lamp of prayer. How often do men complain that they do not know what to think about at meditation, or what to say to God! It is not too much to affirm that regular and rightly practiced spiritual reading, obviates at least half the difficulties of meditation.

Reading is also of no inconsiderable service simply

as an occupation of time. The use of time is one of the chief difficulties of the spiritual life. Now we can not always keep our minds fixed on God; I mean, we who are not saints. We may doubt it of the saints, gravely doubt it; but, having no experience of saint-hood, we can not dogmatize about it. But when the effort to do so would be too much for us, there are in most of our days gaps of time which would be filled up with inutilities. Inutilities would be the most innocent filling up of them, yet how spirit-wasting also! Then reading—not our regular spiritual reading, but conscientiously chosen reading, even of a secular sort—comes in, and not only saves us from evil by being harmless, but does us a positive good in itself.

Moreover it takes possession of the mind, of which the evil one is always on the watch to take possession. It occupies it. It garrisons it. It peoples it with thoughts which are, directly or indirectly, for God. Now in these days there are two contagious influences in the atmosphere around us, which are most deleterious to the spiritual life. They are the multiplicity of interests, and the rapidity of objects. It is sad to see the success with which these two things thrust God out of our minds, perpetually edging a little more forward, and a little more and a little more. The mere occupation of our minds, therefore, with religious objects, has become of serious importance in devotion, especially to those who are living in the world, and so are forced to hear its roar, and to turn giddy at the sight of its portentously-swift whirling and revolving, as if it were a machine of God got loose from His control. I need not dwell on this; but it would not be easy to make too much

of it. For what has taken possession of the current of our thoughts has taken possession of our whole selves. A taste for reading is therefore especially necessary for these times, because of their perils and peculiarities.

It is by this occupation of our thoughts that reading hinders castle-building, which is an inward disease wholly incompatible with devotion. Perhaps it is speaking too broadly to say that reading hinders it altogether; but at least it makes it much less likely, and confines it within narrower bounds. In temptations, also, it is a twofold help, both negative and positive. Negative, because all occupation involves the non-existence of a great many temptations; and positive because it furnishes an actual distraction while we are under temptation, as well as gives us light in our warfare with them, and a heating of the heart which prevents our being chilled by their icy touch. Toward afternoon a person who has nothing to do drifts rapidly away from God. To sit down in a chair without an object is to jump into a thicket of temptations. A vacant hour is always the devil's hour. When time hangs heavy, the wings of the spirit flap painfully and slow. Then it is that a book is a strong tower, nay, a very church, with angels lurking among the leaves, as if they were so many niches.

But from our privacy let us pass to society. Con-versation! What a stormy sea is that for a spiritual man to navigate! Possibilities of sin everywhere, rapid flow of indeliberate words, galloping of images through the mind, indistinct in the dust they raise, impossibility of adequate vigilance because of impossibility of ubiquity, unsatisfactory helplessness in the

effort to preserve general purity of intention,—tongues whetting tongues, brain heating brain, faces kindling faces, rapidity at last becoming terrific; and with rapidity unguarded oblivion,—while truth and justice, and charity and reverence, and modesty and kindness are standing round, mute listeners, shy, jealous, suspicious, frightened, almost fanciful, wincing visibly now and then, and the great fact that we are talking in God, with His immensity for our room, gradually growing less and less distinguishable. But reading helps to make conversation harmless, by making it less petty and less censorious. (Our books are our neighbor's allies, by making it less necessary for us to discuss him. It is very hard for a person who does not like reading to talk without sinning.) As a help to the government of the tongue then,—that government without which St. James tells us, a man's whole religion is vain,—a taste for reading is invaluable.

It also makes us and our piety more attractive to those around us. It enables us to adorn our Christian profession much more in the sight of others. We may be sure that men have on the whole preached the Gospel in their conversation more when they spoke indirectly on religion than when they spoke directly on it. Common interests are a bond. We are better missionaries in daily society if we have a taste for reading; and this of course does not mean spiritual reading on the one hand, nor on the other that light reading which dissipates our spirit, sullies our faith, and makes our conversation puerile or frothy. Above all a taste for reading is necessary for Christian parents. It is evil for those children who are more edu-

cated by tutors and governesses than by their own parents. A mother who is little with her children is but half a mother; and how dull and foolish and uninteresting and uninfluential, must children grow up, if as their minds expand, they find the conversation of their parents as the conversation of unreading persons must be, empty, shallow, gossiping, vapid, and more childish than the children's talk among themselves? It is this which explains what we so often observe—that a taste for reading, or the absence of it is hereditary. Furthermore, still speaking of society, a taste for reading often hinders our taking the wrong side in practical questions, which are mooted in the world but tell upon the Church. It does this either by the information it has enabled us to obtain on the subject itself, or by making our instincts accurate and sensitive through our familiarity with right principles, and with the subjects kindred to the one under discussion.

Now to go back to ourselves again, and our own self-improvement. Do we not all perceive in ourselves a tendency to become vulgar, to be interested with petty interests, to be recreated with foolish recreations, to be allured by ignoble pursuits? Very high spirituality sets us far above all this. But which of us is dwelling in those regions? Meanwhile a taste for reading obviously does the same work for us in another way, and naturally with inferior success, yet with a success complete in its kind and its degree. It raises us. It calls out our manhood. It makes us grave. It infuses an element of greatness into every thing about us. The same taste also helps us with our temper. It aids us in the work of gaining in-

ward peace. When we are fretted, and are too feeble to lay hold of higher things we have always a self-tranquillizing process at hand in reading.

The spiritual life is always more or less a work in the dark; but it is a darkness in which we see. Nevertheless when we can see what we are doing and whither we are going, we work more securely, and advance more rapidly. Even when we see our end before us, we have often to arrest ourselves in life, and make a deliberate election of the means best calculated to bring us to our end, and still more often have we to decide upon the character of some apparent means, which may in reality be a temptation or a distraction. In all these cases we derive the greatest assistance from reading. Indeed it is astonishing how pertinent all our reading seems to become when we are in difficulties. It is as if the Holy Ghost rather than ourselves had chosen what we should read; and it is He most assuredly who gives it now such a special unction, and special message, to our souls in their present straits.

As our taste for reading assists us by illuminating our own work, so does it enlarge our charity in judging of the work of others. The more we know, the less narrow are our minds. Our horizon is wider. We appreciate the manifold varieties of grace and of vocations. We see how God's glory finds its account in almost infinite diversity, and how holiness can be at home in opposites, nay, how what is wrong in this man, is acceptable, perhaps heroic, in that other man. Hence we free ourselves from little jealousies, from uncharitable doubts, from unworthy suspicions, from unsympathetic cautions, from ungener-

ous delays, from narrow criticisms, from conceited pedantries, from shallow pomposities about others and their good works, things which are the especial diseases of little great men, and little good men, and which may be said to frustrate one third, if not more, of all the good works which are attempted in the Church. Goodness which is not greatness also is a sad misfortune. While it saved its own soul, it will not let others save theirs. Especially does it contrive in proportion to its influence to put a spoke in the wheel of all progress, and has almost a talent for interfering with efforts for the conversion of souls. Now if reading did no more than abate the virulence of any one of these eight diseases of narrow goodness mentioned above, would it not be a huge work? But how much more, as experience teaches us, does a taste for reading do, than merely abate the virulence of these things! How many a narrow mind has it made broad! How many close, stifling, unwindowed hearts has it not filled with mountain air and sunshine, and widened them to noble spacious halls, so making room for God, where He had no room before!

It also heightens our whole spiritual standing, by making us more free from human respect. When we have a taste for reading, and reading approved religious books, we acquire the sense of standing under the eye and at the judgment seat of great and holy minds. Their judgments give the law to ours. They introduce us into another world, where right measures and true standards prevail, and where injustice and falsehood are righted in the mind, as they will be righted in fact at the general doom. Hence the judgments of that little inefficient circle immediately round

ourselves, which we surname the world, are less important in our eyes than they used to be. We have got accustomed to higher things, to wider prospects, to greater worlds. He who does not suffer from the tyranny of human respect will hardly appreciate the force of this reason, but in what fortunate clime is that blissful man to be found?

Last of all, we must not forget St. Hugh's reason for making much of good books—that they make illness and sorrow endurable. Doubtless what has surprised us in all our illnesses is that they have sanctified us so little. Our experience of the matter has not been the same as the experience of the saints. It is not so much that we have been less patient, as that we have been more animal. We have been occupied with the physical part of our sufferings. Even sorrow we make too physical. Moreover though others should not ask too much of us, neither should we unwisely overtax ourselves, yet there is no doubt we allow both sorrow and sickness to make us more idle than they need do. Now in the matter of patience, in the matter of inwardly sanctifying our sufferings, and in the matter of needless indolence, we shall find a taste for reading of great service to us both in sickness and sorrow.

“But all these are very low and merely natural reasonings!” True; but are we fit for higher things yet? Surely, if we rightly estimate ourselves, we may feel that we are too low for the lowest thing that is good; but we can not feel that we are too high for any thing.

CHAPTER V.

INTERCESSION.

What is prayer? The mystery of prayer? There are many things which go to make up a true account of prayer. First we must consider who we are who pray. None could have a more ignoble origin. We were created out of nothing, and we came into the world with the guilt and shame of sin already on our souls, and the burden of a hideous penalty which eternal lamentation never could remit. To our original disgrace we have added all manner of guilt and shame, of treason, of rebellion, of irritability and disrespect of our own. There are no words which would exaggerate our malice, no description which would convey a fair idea of our helpless ignorance. Every thing about us was little to begin with and we have made it immeasurably less. It is hard to conceive ourselves worse than we are; so much so that it is necessary to make it a duty to be patient and forbearing with ourselves quite as much as with others. Then next we must consider who it is to whom we pray. The infinitely blessed Majesty of God, than which nothing can be conceived more good, more holy, more pure, more august, more adorable, more compassionate, more incomprehensible, or more unutterable. The very thought of God takes away our

breath. He is Three living Persons. We live and move and breathe in Him. He can do what He wills with us. He is no further bound to us than He has graciously and piteously chosen to bind Himself. He knows every thing without our telling Him or asking Him. Yet it is to Him we pray. Next, let us think where it is we pray. Whether it be a consecrated place or not. It is in God Himself. We are in the midst of Him, as fishes are in the sea. His immensity is our temple. His ear lies close upon our lips. It is always listening. Thoughts speak to it as loudly as words, sufferings even louder than words. His ear is never taken away. We sigh into it, even while we sleep and dream.

Next, let us ask whence comes the value of our prayers. They are fleeting words; fugitive petitions. There is naught in us to give ground for a hearing, except the very excess of our unworthiness, and therefore the extremity of our need. Else, why should our prayers be in the Creator's ear more than the roaring of a lion, or the querulous complaining of the plover, or the cry of the suffering beast run down by the hunters? Their value comes principally from this—that God Himself has vouchsafed to become man, has lain out upon the inclement mountains, and spent the night in prayer. He mixes us up with Himself; makes our cause His, His interests ours, and we become one with Him. So by a mysterious communion the work of His prayers runs into our prayers, the wealth of His enriches the poverty of ours, the infinity of His, touches, raises, and magnifies the wretchedness of ours. So when we pray, it is not we who pray, but He who prays. We speak

into our Heavenly Father's ear, and it is not our voice but the voice of Jesus that God vouchsafes to hear. Or rather, the Eternal vouchsafes to be like Isaac in his blind old age. His younger son kneels before Him for His blessing, with license to play his elder brother's part. "The voice indeed is the voice of Jacob," and it is not he whom I will bless, "but the hands are the hands of Esau," roughened with the toil of the world's redemption. And He says, with Isaac, "Come near me, and give me a kiss, my son." And immediately, as He smells the fragrant smell of His garments, for it is of a truth the stole of Christ, blessing him, He says, "Behold the smell of my son is as the smell of a plentiful field," and so He filleth him with blessings. Neither is this an end of the inventions of His paternal love. For, we must next inquire with whom it is we pray. Never alone; of this we are sure, whenever we rightly pray. There is One dwelling in us who is co-equal, co-eternal God, proceeding from the Father and the Son. He forms the word in our hearts, and then puts music in our cry, when we exclaim "Abba, Father!" He is our "access to the Father." He "strengthens us with might unto the inward man." He makes us "speak to ourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles, singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God and the Father." He is the Spirit in whom "we pray at all times, by all prayer and supplication." He is the Spirit who "helpeth our infirmities." Oh then does not the mystery of prayer deepen and deepen upon us?

Next look at the incredible ease of prayer. Every time, place, posture, is fitting; for there is no time, place, or posture in which and by which we can not reverently confess the Presence of God. Talent is not needed. Eloquence is out of place. Dignity is no recommendation. Our want is our eloquence, our misery, our recommendation. Thought is quick as lightning, and quick as lightning can it multiply effectual prayer. Actions can pray, sufferings can pray. There need no ceremonies; there are no rubrics to keep. The whole function is expressed in a word; it is simply this—the child at his father's knee, his words stumbling over each other from very earnestness, and his wistful face pleading better than his hardly intelligible prayer.

Then consider the efficacy of prayer. We have only to pray for lawful things, to pray for them often and perseveringly, and to believe we shall receive them, and receive them too, not according to the poverty of our foolish intentions, but according to the riches and wisdom, and munificence of God; and it is an infallible truth that we shall receive them. God is at our disposal. He allows us this almost unbounded influence over him, not once or twice, but all our lives long. Are there any of the mysteries of grace sweeter than this?

Then, last of all, it is not for ourselves alone He lets us pray, but for others also. Nay, He expressly commands us to make intercessory prayer. Through His apostle He speaks with that positive and unusual form, "I desire first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made by men." Thus the inestimable privilege, the mysterious gift of

prayer, is given to us not merely for our own necessities, but that we may use it for the temporal and spiritual good of others. How strict an account shall we have to render for so great a favor, and how careful we should be that this power should not be entrusted to us in vain! Whatever other talents God may not have given to us, this one, without doubt, He has given to us. There is no distinction of persons; young and old, rich and poor, learned and simple, we are all of us bound to the practice of intercessory prayer. Woe unto us if we hide our talent, or venture to return it to our Judge at the last unfruitful! Let each one examine himself, and see what time he has given hitherto to this devotion, and whether the past in this respect is altogether what he would have it to be. To pray always is a hard precept, and one we can only come to by time and habit, as well as by gift and grace. But the thing is to find that the older we grow, the more we pray, and the more we pray, the more our prayer takes the line of intercession for the souls of others.

But let us apply our three instincts of the devout life to the practice of intercessory prayer. If we love our Heavenly Father, there is a gentle constraint upon us to hunger for His glory; and souls are His honor, and sin His dishonor. Now we may not be able to preach, or to write books, or to traverse distant lands as missionaries, or to give money to send others there. It may be little indeed, that of ourselves, and by our actions, we can do for God's glory or the conversion of souls. But intercession reaches everywhere. Neither time nor place bound it. Ignorance can not keep it out, nor superstition silence

it, nor sin refuse to stay within its influence. Wherever grace can come, prayer can reach. We hear of some land where God's glory is endangered. Or again we read with burning eyes and heart of the spiritual destitution of the slaves or aborigines in certain countries. Or of the impenetrable provinces of China and Japan, or of cities of scandalous profligacy, or of disedifying controversies and foolish parties and silly questions. There is no saying to what an extent God's glory is compromised by any one of these things. We may be the weakest and most obscure among the Church's children; yet we can reach all this by intercession, and reach it too with efficacy and power. We may work for it without interruption; our ordinary actions may go to it; we may do more than all the ambassadors and legates that ever were, and yet not for an hour be distracted from our profession or our trade. We shall never know, till it meets us at the judgment, a goodly show, a beautiful vision, how much glory we have thus gained for God, without cost, without toil, almost without advertence, yet with such infinite and eternal recompense.

In like manner shall we also by intercession advance the interests of Jesus. Take any one temptation from which you suffer yourself. How wearisomely it dogs you, how miserably it entraps you; how it is always wakeful, always fixing itself on every good work, devotion, prayer. How tired you get of resisting, how often you unhappily consent, how still more often you are teased and disquieted because you can not make out whether you have consented or not! Yet every moment of resistance is a

supernatural act, a victory of grace, an interest of Jesus. Nay, so also is every sigh of sorrow over a fall, every ejaculation sent up, arrow-like to heaven; every naming of Jesus on the confines and in the risk of sin. Now how many thousands are there all the world over, who are wearily fighting with the same temptation, and possibly under more disadvantageous circumstances than yourself? See then how many interests of Jesus you can reach by intercession in this single respect; and I am purposely selecting a trifling matter, trifling that is in comparison of other things where our Blessed Lord is yet more concerned. Do at least as much as this: intercede for those who are being tempted with the same temptation as yourself. Intercession can shut up casinos, take away licenses of taverns, discountenance races, draw betting-offices down to bankruptcy, and ruin unspeakable haunts of sin. If we can do such an immense work for Jesus, with scarcely any trouble to ourselves, can we think we love Him, if we are not doing it?

Then again if we have the saving of souls at heart, how can we be lukewarm in intercession? Here too, so much can be done, done infallibly, and all with so much ease. How few preachers are holy men, and yet without unction what will their sermons be worth? And if the world, as St. Paul says, is to be brought into subjection to Christ by the foolishness of preaching, what is to be done, if by intercession we do not impetrate either earnestness for the preacher, or an unction with his words for the hearer's sake. Eloquence, a plague upon the word when we are talking of Jesus and of souls! has no gift or benediction. Its

harvest is but the preacher's praise, and the wasted time of the silly, gaping audience. God's blessing is the thing. There is a story, a very strange one, I will not vouch for its being true, but I will quote it for the sake of the wise teaching it contains. A certain religious, a very popular preacher, was expected one day in a convent of his order, where he was a stranger. In the afternoon he arrived, or rather an evil spirit who personated him arrived, to see what mischief he could do. It so happened that there was to be a sermon on hell preached that day by one of the monks; but he was ill, and unable to preach. So they asked this devil to preach on hell, which he did; and as may be supposed from his experience, a most wonderful sermon it was. However, on the arrival of the real preacher, the evil one was discovered, and was obliged by the sign of the cross to disclose himself and his malicious designs. Among other things, he was asked, how it was not against his interests to preach such a frightening sermon about hell, as it would keep people from sin. "Not at all," he replied, "there was no unction with it, so it could do no harm." Here again preaching is but one way by which intercession can reach souls. I merely give it as a sample.

But let us now see for whom especially these intercessions should be offered.

1. For those who are in mortal sin, or out of the true Church. 2. For those who are in lukewarmness or tepidity. For these are on the very verge of great sins, and yet they are in a state of grace at present. Their necessity is great, and so they claim our charity. Their renewal to favor, if they fall, is very difficult,

more so than the conversion of sinners, and so it is a great glory of God. As God has been pleased to reveal to us His especial distaste for the lukewarm, so it would be very acceptable to Him, if we made prayer for the lukewarm one of our special devotions. It is a devotion of much love, and of many graces. And perhaps you may not have thought of it before. 3. The multiplication of the saints and their final perseverance. The glory of God, the good of souls, and the interests of Jesus, are all implicated here and that in so many and such great ways, that I need hardly stop to point them out, they are so obvious. 4. For all those the world over who are in various necessities and tribulations, whether spiritual or temporal. Hear what Orlandini says of Father Peter Faber. "It increased the grief and sorrow of this tender-hearted man that the majority of people do not know how to refer their affairs and miseries to God, but rely upon human helps while they neglect divine ones. This vehemently stimulated His compassion, so that he himself laid before God the cares and calamities of men, and became a suppliant for them, in all their straits, troubles, misfortunes and necessities, till at last he passionately desired like Moses, to have his hands always lifted up on high, to carry help and consolation to so many who were battling with suffering and sorrow. He had pictured to himself the various vexations, calamities, diseases, pains, hunger, despair, want, and all the countless evils to which men are subject, and he pleaded all their causes with God, as if he had been appointed in some special way the common father of the whole world." 5. For the necessities of our benefactors, among whom are to be reck-

oned our enemies, because they give us occasions of merit, and help us on the road to Heaven. 6. For those who are seriously occupied in the pursuit of Christian perfection, and for whatever they desire in order to that end, though it may involve pain and suffering.

There is another intercessory devotion of such great beauty that the simple statement of it will be its sufficient recommendation. This is to be found in the life of Marie Louise de Martignac, one of the first religious of the Visitation. She spent almost the first fifty years of her life in the courts of France and Savoy, but the spirit of the world never passed upon her heart, any more than the smell of fire upon the garments of the three children in the fiery furnace. The way in which she fenced off the spirit of the world was as follows: she took a text of Scripture for each of the seven days of the week, in order to occupy her mind continually with the words of truth. Her choice of texts was remarkable. On Sunday she took the words—"I am come into the world to bring light, that he who believeth in me, may not abide in the darkness." On Monday:—"He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." On Tuesday:—"It is as hard for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, as to pass a cable through the eye of a needle; nothing however, is impossible with God." On Wednesday:—"My kingdom is not of this world, and the devil is called by Jesus, the prince of this world." On Thursday:—"I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me." On Friday:—"Now is the judgment of the world, and I, if I am lifted up, shall draw all things

unto me." On Saturday:—"If you love me, my Father will give you another Paraclete to abide with you eternally, the Spirit of Truth whom the world can not receive, because it seeketh Him not, neither knoweth Him." From these seven fountains of truth, her soul was visited by such abundant lights as to the misery of this world, and the unsatisfactoriness of its honors and pleasures, that she had continually in her mouth the words of Solomon:—"Vanity of vanities, all things under the sun are vanity."

Hence during her whole life, she possessed this enlightened compassion for the rich, and made special intercession for them. She said that it was a greater charity to pray for them, than for those who were languishing in hospitals and prisons. She declared that nothing ought at once to humble and encourage Christians more than the heroic sanctity of great people who have kept humility in the midst of glory. I do not know if it will seem so to others, but to me there is something extremely touching in this devotion, so truly spiritual, considerate, and heavenly.

The whole duty of intercessory prayer, and our own discharge of it may help us to one of those occasional revelations, which are so profitable to our souls. Our spiritual life seems to be going on all safely and smoothly. We do not imagine ourselves to be saints. But we feel we are taking pains. We manage to keep ourselves in a state of grace. Nay, we have made distinct sacrifices for God, either in being converted to the faith, or in embracing the ecclesiastical state, or some way or other; and although we do not actually rest upon the meritoriousness of these sacrifices as though our predestina-

tion were finally and happily fulfilled in them, yet we never forget them, and the thought of them is a continual support to us. These are beginnings of something very bad. But our Lord comes to our rescue, and without any apparent cause, a supernatural light is poured into our souls, illuminating every corner and hiding-place, and revealing to us in a most startling way, *how very little after all we have done for God*. It is like the light of the Particular Judgment which lays all our life with its actions and motives clearly before us in one moment, so that God may be justified, and we pass a fair sentence on ourselves. Oh, how blessed are these little revelations! For out of them comes humility, and freshness, and strength, and joy in Jesus, and abandonment of self in the arms of God. We could not believe we did so little for God, if this gracious light did not flash in upon us in such a way that we can not refuse to see, or doubt that we have seen it. Think of intercession, and see whether it may not bring you now another of these affectionate revelations.

Of all the fruits of the Holy Ghost, none seems more desirable because none is less earthly, or more heavenly, than joy; and it is just this fruit which our Blessed Lord bestows on such as devote themselves to intercession. This is very observable. Whosoever desires to joy in God, and to abound in all joy and consolation in the Lord, to be gay and prompt in serving Jesus, and to be equable in all things, which is not far from being holy in all things; let him throw away himself and his own ends, and, wedding the dear interests of Jesus and of souls, betake himself to intercession, as if it were his trade, or he had as

much to do with it as his guardian angel has to do with him. Joy is the especial recompense of intercession. It is part of His joy who rejoices in the harvest of His Passion. What stirs in our hearts has come to us from His. It was first in His, before it was in ours, and an angel's presence would be less desirable than is that little taste of the Redeemer's joy.

CHAPTER VI

THANKSGIVING.

If we had to name any one thing that seems unaccountably to have fallen out of most men's practical religion altogether, it would be the duty of thanksgiving. It would not be easy to exaggerate the common neglect of this duty. There is little enough of prayer, but there is still less thanksgiving. Alas! it is not hard to find the reason of this. Our own interests drive us obviously to prayer, but it is love alone which leads to thanksgiving. A man who only wants to avoid hell knows that he must pray; he has no such strong instinct impelling him to thanksgiving. It is the old story. Never did prayer come more from the heart than the piteous cry of those ten lepers who beheld Jesus entering into a town. Their desire to be heard made them courteous and considerate. They stood afar off, lest He should be angry, if they with their foul disease came too near Him. They lifted up their voice saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." When the miracle was wrought, the nine went on in selfish joy to show themselves to the priest; but one, only one, and he an outcast Samaritan, when he saw that he was made clean went back, with a loud voice glorifying God, and he fell on his face before our

Saviour's feet, giving thanks. Even the Sacred Heart of Jesus was distressed, and as it were astonished, and He said, "Were not ten made clean? and where are the nine? There is no one found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger!" How many a time have not we caused the same sad surprise?

When the neglect of a duty is so shocking as is surely the neglect of thanksgiving, it is desirable to show the amount of obligation which rests upon us in the matter; and this can best be done by the authority of Scripture. St. Paul tells the Ephesians, that we are to be "giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God and the Father." To the Colossians the apostle says: "Be instant in prayer; watching in it in thanksgiving." Creatures are said to be created to be received with thanksgiving by the faithful, and by them that have known the truth, "for every creature of God is good, and nothing to be rejected that is received with thanksgiving. And it was the very characteristic of the heathen, that when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, nor gave thanks.

What is our life on earth but a preparation for our real life in heaven? and yet, praise and thanksgiving are the very occupations of our life in heaven. Now the Church on earth reflects the Church in heaven; the worship of one is the echo of the worship of the other. If the life in heaven is one of praise and thanksgiving, so in its measure must be the life on earth. Even the Jews felt that all prayer must one day cease, except the prayer of thanksgiving, as Wetstein tells us out of the Talmud. But we have to do with it now as part of our service of love. Let

us suppose that the true idea of worship was the one implied in the common practice of most men; that it was simply a matter of prayer to a Superior Being. What relation does this put us in with God? He is our King, our Superior, a keeper of treasures, Himself infinite wealth. We go to Him to ask for something. He is to us what a rich man is to a beggar. Our own interest is the prominent part of the matter. Or we are afraid of His justice. We desire to be let off our punishment, and have our sins forgiven. He is pitiful, and will hear us if we are importunate. Taking prayer only as the whole of worship, we can rise no higher than this. It is all very true, and very necessary besides. Prayer can teach us to depend on God, and answered prayer to trust in Him. But Infinite Goodness will not let us rest on such terms with Him. We are to be with Him to all eternity; He is to be our everlasting joy; to know Him, and to love Him is life; and the love of Him is the joyful praise of Him forever. To thank a benefactor simply to get more from him, is not thanksgiving, but a flattering form of petition. We thank God because we love Him, because His love of us touches us, surprises us, melts us, wins us. Indeed so much is thanksgiving a matter of love, that we shall thank Him most of all in heaven when He has given us His crowning gift of the Beatific Vision; when He has given us all of Himself we can contain, and so there is nothing left for us to receive. Thanksgiving is therefore the very essence of worship, and as the practice of it increases our love, so does the neglect of it betoken how little love we have.

We do not find fault with sinners who are living

out of the grace of God, because they do not make thanksgiving. They have something else to do. They have to reconcile themselves with God, and wash their souls afresh in the Precious Blood of Jesus. The neglect of thanksgiving is an ingratitude which our dear Lord has to impute to His own forgiven children, who are living in His peace, and in the enjoyment of all His privileges. Now this deserves to be especially noted. I do not know if you will agree with me, but to my mind the faults of good people, I do not mean slips and infirmities, but cold, heartless faults, have something specially odious about them. A sin is not so shocking a thing to look at, for all its intrinsic deadliness; and this may be the reason why in the Apocalypse, God breaks out with such unusual and vivid language about lukewarmness and tepidity. When the angels asked our Lord as He ascended, "What are those wounds in thy hands?" how much is insinuated in His reply, "The wounds wherewith I was wounded in the house of my friends!" It would be worth while writing a treatise entitled: On the Sins of Good People; for they are many and various, and have a peculiar malice and hatefulness of their own. Unthankfulness is one of the chief of them. At least then bear this in mind, while we are talking of thanksgiving. Dry people are ordinarily so self-righteous, that it is a positive comfort to get them up into a corner, and to be able to say to them, Now we have nothing to do with sinners at present. You can not put the sharp things upon them; you are the guilty people; the reproof is all for you; here is something which, if you do not do, and do well for God, you are a wretch; wretch, you know, is the very word, the

acknowledged epithet for the ungrateful; well, and with all your prayers, you do not do it. Yet why not take a good heart, both you and I, and arrange with God for a little more grace, and then He shall see how different our future practice is to be? From the particular faults of good people, deliver us, O Lord!

The Bible is a revelation of love; but it is not the only one. There is to each one of us a special and personal revelation of Divine Love in the retrospect of that Fatherly Providence which has watched over us through our lives. Who can look back on the long chain of graces of which his life has been composed since the hour of his baptism, without a feeling of surprise at the unweariedness and minuteness of God's love. The way in which things have been arranged for his happiness and welfare, obstacles disappearing as he drew nigh to them, and just when they seemed most insurmountable, temptations turning to his good, and what seemed chastisements as he faced them, turning to love when he looked back upon them. Every sorrow has found its place in his life, and he would have been a loser if he had been without it. Chance acquaintances have had their meaning and done their work; and somehow it seems as if foreseeing love itself could not have woven his web of life differently from what it is, even if it had woven it of love alone. He did not feel it at the time. He did not know God was so much to him; for what more unostentatious than a Father's love? When Jacob made his pillow of the cold stones and lay down to sleep, where he had his vision of the ladder, he saw nothing uncommon in the place; but when he awoke out of sleep, he said, "Indeed, the

Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." When Moses desired to see God, the Lord set him in a hole of the rock and protected him with His right hand while His intolerable glory was passing by, and He said, "I will take away my hand, and thou shalt see my back, but my Face thou shalt not see." This is ever God's way. He is with us, tender, loving, considerate, forgiving. Our hearts burn within us, as did the hearts of the two disciples as they walked and talked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus; but it is not until He vanishes from our sight, that we know of a truth that it was our dear Lord Himself.

Now, stop, dear reader, and meditate for a few minutes on the Eternal Word; remember which of the Three Divine Persons He is; the Second Person, the eternally begotten Word of the Father, the splendor of His Majesty, uncreated Wisdom, the same Person who was incarnate and crucified for us, the same who sent us the Holy Ghost, in whose mind revolve at this moment the countless lustres of all possible creations; then think what His liberalities must be,—no bound or measure to them. We can not count their number, nor exhaust their freshness, nor understand their excellence, nor hold their fulness, nor give intelligible human names to their kinds, inventions, varieties, and wonders. Oh that we had more special devotion to the Person of the Eternal Word! that we would read about Him, the wonders the Church can tell us, and then meditate and make acts of love on what we read. And then remember that thanksgiving prepares the soul for His amazing liberalities. You see you must begin this day and hour quite a new and more royal sort of thanksgiving than those

mere infrequent, formal, respectful civilities, by which you have heretofore been content to acknowledge your accumulated obligations to our dearest Lord.

It will be a great practical help to us in thanksgiving to classify the different blessings for which we are bound continually to thank God, and,

First of all, we should thank God for the blessings which are common to the whole human race. Orlandini mentions this as one of the characteristics of Father Peter Faber. He was always gratefully mindful, not only of God's private blessings, but of those common to all mankind. He never forgot that thanks were due to the divine liberality, not less for these common blessings than for special ones; and it was a source of grief to him that men generally paid no attention to them, but took them as matters of course. He mourned because men rarely blessed that sweet will and boundless charity of God, by which He had first created the world, and then redeemed it, and after that prepared for us eternal glory, and that in all this He had vouchsafed to think specially and distinctly of each one of us. And thus Orlandini tells us that Peter Faber used to be continually congratulating the angels and the blessed on their gifts, assiduously pondering the particular graces God had given them, and then separately, for each of them, naming those he could, with great emotion he gave God thanks for them on their behalf. He practiced this devotion until at last he came to feel as if there was not a single token of the Divine Goodness shown to any one for which he was not personally a debtor. He made himself a kind of vicar for every one who had any sort of happiness or success, and no sooner

did he perceive it, than he set to work to bless God, and to give thanks. There was nothing joyous, nothing prosperous that he saw or heard of, but he at once became its voice of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord. Nay, fair cities, fruitful fields, beautiful olive-grounds, delightful vineyards,—he looked round upon them with exulting eye, and because they could not speak for themselves, he spoke for them, and thanked the Lord of all for their beauty, and in the name of their owners and possessors, for the dominion which He had given them thereof.

The second class of the divine mercies, for which we are bound to offer continual thanksgiving, is obviously the multitude of personal blessings which we have received from the unmerited goodness of God. How beautifully St. Bernard expresses this in his first sermon on the Canticles. In the wars and conflicts, says he, which at no hour are wanting to those who live devoutly in Christ, whether from the flesh, the world, or the devil, for man's life is a warfare on the earth, as you have all experienced in yourselves,—in all these conflicts we must daily renew our songs of gratitude for the victories already obtained. As often as a temptation is overcome, or a vice subdued, or an imminent danger avoided, or a snare of the evil one discovered in time, or an inveterate passion of the soul healed, or a virtue long coveted and prayed for, at length by the gift of God granted to us, what must we do, but, according to the Prophet, utter the voice of praise and thanksgiving, and bless God at each single blessing for all His gifts? Among our personal blessings we must thank God for the continuance of health and life, whereby we can daily glorify

the dear majesty of God by acts of love. We must thank Him also for past and present humiliations, for calumnies, unkind interpretations of our words, deeds, omissions, or intentions, the detractions we have suffered from, and every thing which has ever happened to mortify our self-love. For if we consider the true interests of our soul, it is a real blessing to be humbled and kept down, not only because it helps us to advance in the way of perfection, but also of the innumerable opportunities it gives us of glorifying God. Indeed, there is hardly any thing by which we can glorify God more effectually than by the exercise of virtues while we are under humiliations. So if we are in a condition or state of life in which we do not attract the notice or praise of men, we ought to thank God most warmly for it, considering the danger there would be to our souls in a more elevated or honorable state. The patience and long-suffering of God should be another subject of continual thanksgiving. Is it not wonderful how He has borne with us, and we so miserably perverse the while? Can we not well enter into the spirit of that Spanish lady who said "that if she had to build a church in honor of the attributes of God, she would dedicate it to the Divine Patience?" How beautiful her soul must have been, and how many deep and intimate things must have passed between her and God!

Again, how many sins have we been in the way of committing, or near to committing, and by grace have not done so? And how many temptations have proved fatal to others, which never so much as came in our way? Even the heathen emperor Antoninus thanked God for the occasions of sin to which he had

never been exposed. This then is another personal blessing for which we must always be giving thanks. St. Chrysostom, also, would have us remember with special gratitude the hidden and unknown blessings which God has heaped upon us. God, he says is an overrunning fountain of clemency, flowing upon us, and round about us, even when we know it not. Orlandini tells us that in this matter also Father Peter Faber was remarkable. He used to say there were hardly any blessings we ought more scrupulously to thank God for, than those we never asked, and those which come to us without our knowing it. It is not unlikely, in the case of many of us, that these hidden blessings may turn out at the last day to have been the very hinges on which our lives turned, and that through them our predestination has been worked out, and our eternal rest secured.

Neither must we think that too much is being asked of us, when spiritual writers tell us we ought to return thanks to God for afflictions and tribulations, both those which are passed and those which we may be suffering from at this present time. John of Avila used to say that one *Deo gratias* in adversity was worth six thousand in prosperity. But we must again refer to Orlandini in his description of the special gift of thanksgiving which Peter Faber possessed. He thought it was not enough that men should humble themselves under the hand of God in the time of public calamities, but that they should give God hearty thanks for them, for famine and scarcity, for wars, floods, pestilences, and all the other scourges of heaven; and it was a subject of "vehement" sorrow to him that men did not openly acknowledge God's

merciful intentions in these things. When He grieved over the misfortunes of others, what stirred His sorrow most was that men did not see how much of gentleness there was in the visitation; for that is not perfect gratitude which is fed by favors only. "Nay, we can not tell," says St. Antiochus, "who is really grateful till we see whether he gives God hearty and sincere thanks in the midst of calamities," and St. Chrysostom, in his homilies on the epistle to the Ephesians, says, we ought to thank God for hell itself, and for all the pains and punishments that are there, because they are such an effectual bridle to our inordinate passions.

It is also a very important devotion to thank God for what we call trifling blessings. Not of course that any goodness of God is trifling to such as we are; but mercies may be little by comparison. St. Bernard applies to this devotion our Lord's injunction to His disciples to gather up the fragments that nothing be lost. Orlandini tells us that Peter Faber excelled in this devotion also, and that he used to say, that in every gift of God, no matter how trifling, three things were to be considered,—the Giver, the gift, and the affection with which it was given; and that if we pondered these three points, we should see that there could be no such things as little mercies. And doubtless this was the reason, says the biographer, why that blessed mind was always overflowing with the abundance of divine gifts. For as God is an inexhaustible ocean of goodness, the fountain of his liberality can not be dried up where He meets with a considerate and thankful mind into which He can pour Himself. So Thomas à Kempis observes, that

if we look at the dignity of the Giver, no gift is small which comes from God.

Another practice of holy men has been to thank God on behalf of the irrational creatures, a devotion most acceptable to Him, as the wise Creator of the world; and it has also the further advantage of being a most excellent practice of the Presence of God, enabling us everywhere, and at all times, to rise to Him by means of His creatures.

We shall also glorify God, by thanking Him for the blessings conferred upon our enemies. This devotion will be the more acceptable to Him because it is a great exercise of brotherly love; for it is impossible to practice it long without all coldness and uncomfortable feeling giving way to gentleness and tenderness, even toward those who have wronged us most, or who show the greatest dislike of us.

Another practice of thanksgiving is to thank our Blessed Lord with the utmost fervor and simplicity of joy, for the immense multitude of angels and saints who fill the choirs of heaven, adoring Him as their Head, and thanking Him as the Author of all grace, and the Giver of all gifts. For if we sincerely love Him, it is our chief sorrow that we can not love Him worthily, and therefore it is really a blessing bestowed upon ourselves that He should have been pleased to create creatures who can love Him so much more than we do.

But it is now time to ask ourselves the important question, What has been our own practice hitherto with regard to the duty of thanksgiving in general? What is our habitual feeling about God's numberless blessings to us? How long a time have we ever

spent in summing up God's blessings to us? Many of us have regular times in the day for different spiritual duties. Have we any time specially set apart for thanksgiving? Many of us again keep in our prayer-books a little note of the things and persons to pray for. Have we any similar memento of the blessings for which we desire daily to thank our heavenly Father? How often have we besieged the Throne of Grace for weeks and weeks for something we desired; and when at last our dear Lord condescended to our importunity, what proportion did our thanksgiving bear to our supplication? Alas! I fear we have all great need to take shame to ourselves in this respect. So far from having an abiding spirit of thanksgiving, or a keen, life-long recollection of God's mercies, we go on letting the Holy Spirit Himself touch our hearts with an intimate sense of our obligations to God and our dependence upon Him, waiting till He does so, and then feebly responding to His call; so that we let Him, as it were, ask for our thanks, rather than pay them with a free heart, and out of abounding love.

And what is the cause of all this? I do not care if I write it again and again, till you are weary of reading it, if only that would insure your remembering it. It comes from your perverse refusal to look at God, as your Father. Independent of open sin there is scarcely a misery which does not come from these hard, dry, churlish views of God. That is the root of the evil.

Whether it is stunted growth in the spiritual life which you deplore, or the absence of all sensible devotion; or incapacity to make or keep generous resolutions, or teasing relapses into unworthy imperfections, or want of reverence in prayer, or lack of

sweetness with others; in almost every case, the mischief may be traced to an unaffectionate view of God. You must get clear of this. You must cultivate a filial feeling toward Him. You must pray to the Holy Spirit for His gift of piety, whose special office it is to produce this feeling: You must remember that the Spirit of Jesus is the one true Spirit; and that He is the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father! You will never be right until your view of God as your Father swallows up all your other views of Him, or at least till they are brought into harmonious subordination to that view, which is the sweet soul of the Gospel, and the life of our Blessed Saviour's teaching. A man could not do better than devote his whole life to be the apostle of this one idea—the compassionate Paternity of God.

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